The New Criterion

May 1998

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

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Volume 16, Number 9, $4.75

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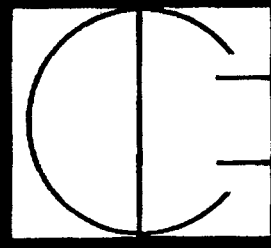

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Published monthly except July and August by The Foundation for Cultural Review, Inc., 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019, a nonprofit public foundation as described in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue code, which solicits and accepts contributions from a wide range of sources, including public and private foundations, corporations, and the general public. ISSN 0734-0222. May 1998, Volume 16, Number 9. Subscriptions: $36 for one year, $65 for two. Outside the United States, add $7 per year. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscribers: send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to The New Criterion, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834. For subscription problems call (800) 783-4903. Copyright © 1998 by The Foundation for Cultural Review, Inc. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., One Media Way, 12406 Rt. 250, Milan, OH 44846. (800) 221-3148. Available in microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. All correspondence should be addressed to The New Criterion, 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019. (212) 247-6980. Notice of nonreceipt must be sent to the Office Manager within three months of the issue date. Internet: http://www.newcriterion.com Email: letters@newcriterion.com

Advertising: Galleries & fine arts: Fred Stern, 44 Paulin Boulevard, Leonia, NJ 07605. (201) 947-2674.
Publishers & others: Richard A. Vaughan, 129 Phelps Avenue, Rockford, IL 61108. (815) 398-8569.

The New Criterion is designed by Alvin and James Eisenman. It is set in 10-point Galliard and is printed by Science Press in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, USA.

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Spring 1998 $10 • $12 Can. • £8

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Notes & Comments: May 1998

The Dodo's revenge

The Dodo suddenly called out, "The race is over!" and they all crowded round it, panting, and asking, "But who has won?"

This question the Dodo could not answer without a great deal of thought, and it stood for a long time with one finger pressed upon its forehead. . . . At last the Dodo said "Everybody *has won, and* all *must have prizes*."
—Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Writing about the Pulitzer Prize some years ago, Joseph Epstein observed that it was an award that was usually conferred upon two classes of writers and artists: those who didn't need it, and those who didn't deserve it. This year's roster of Pulitzer winners amply confirmed that analysis with some noteworthy awards in both categories. Indeed, with the Pulitzer for the best biography of the year going to Katharine Graham for *Personal History*, the Prize committee managed to satisfy both of Mr. Epstein's criteria with a single award. In the future, however, the Pulitzer committee ought to consider creating a new category for an award to a bestselling book of celebrity memoirs, for it is to that genre of sub-literature rather than to the art of biography that *Personal History* really belongs.

As to Pulitzers that went to artists and writers who don't need them, the foremost example this year was the special citation given posthumously to George Gershwin on the centennial of his birth. Now the practice of creating posthumous Pulitzers for achievements that earlier Prize committees were too stupid to honor during the lifetimes of figures worthy of their recognition is an interesting one. Yet on the list of names that come to mind for these posthumous Pulitzers, Gershwin's is by no means among the weightiest contenders. Future committees pondering this posthumous prize will have to consider Henry Adams for autobiography and Lionel Trilling for criticism, among the many other candidates worthy of attention.

As for Pulitzer "citations" specially reserved for centennial occasions, we note with interest that the committee allowed the recent centennial of Edmund Wilson's birth to pass without notice. We could not help but think of this particular oversight when we read the citation for the Pulitzer that went this year to Michiko Kakutani, the book critic for *The New York Times*. The prize was given for "something close to a pure critical intelligence." Exactly how "close" Ms. Kakutani was thought to have come to that state of critical perfection, the citation mercifully omitted to say.

On the other hand, when we come to recognize what may be called the Dodo quotient in the entire Pulitzer phenomenon and thus understand the character of the entire process, we grant that it does make a certain absurdist sense.

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"The Hudson Review" at 50

As we look around the cultural landscape today, we find few causes for celebration. The sad fact is that cultural life in America has been dumbed-down, politicized, and coarsened to a degree almost unimaginable even a few decades ago. Wherever one turns, it seems, the rebarbative competes with the deadeningly simple-minded for one's attention. There is all the more reason, then, to pay tribute to those few oases of civilization that flourish here and there in the encroaching desert of triviality and degradation. Since the spring of 1948, when its first issue appeared, *The Hudson Review* has been a welcome voice of urbanity and sophistication in the world of American arts and letters. Founded by the poet Frederick Morgan with the late Joseph Bennett and the late critic and translator William Arrowsmith, this distinguished quarterly has consistently provided a refuge for intelligent, unacademic criticism of literature and the arts, as well as some of the most thoughtful contemporary poetry and short fiction. Indeed, a look at the early years of *The Hudson Review* reveals a dazzling roster of contributors, including Ezra Pound, Thomas Mann, Wallace Stevens, Paul Valéry, Joseph Kerman, W. H. Auden, Eudora Welty, and T. S. Eliot.

Fifty years is a very long time in the world of serious intellectual journals. One can think of only a few with longer runs than *The Hudson Review*, and no journal has been more distinguished in its literary ambitions. To commemorate this milestone, Frederick Morgan and Paula Dietz, the co-editors of the magazine, have just published a special issue featuring—in addition to their usual array of poems, stories, and criticism—eight essays on "American Themes."

The lead essay of this special issue, by Joseph Epstein, reviews the political and moral significance of the first and greatest of the American Founding Fathers, George Washington. At a time when at least one American high school has repudiated the name "George Washington" because of the slavery issue, it is refreshing to read a percipient and heartfelt celebration of this duty-bound lover of liberty. Noting that after the American Revolution Washington wished more than anything to return to his farm and family in Virginia, Mr. Epstein asks what could have moved him to accept "the most arduous service his nation offered." In brief, the answer is duty—what Mr. Epstein describes as a "profound sense of duty that derived from his, Washington's, moral character." This of course is a theme that has particular resonance at the present moment, for, as Mr. Epstein observes at the end of his essay,

> moral character is what we continue to ask of all our politicians, and it is of course what they almost always refuse to supply. . . .
>
> Behind Washington's rigid sense of honor . . . was really a concern that he show proper disinterest and never take advantage of his influence. . . . He believed that honorable conduct was crucial to public life. . . . He believed that good character meant more than anything else—than special interest, than idealism, than any theoretical concerns—and worked to develop a character of the kind in himself that proved the point.

Mr. Epstein's essay is called "George Washington, An Amateur's View," a particularly appropriate title, we thought, with which to begin the fiftieth-anniversary issue of *The Hudson Review*. Today, the word "amateur" is sometimes used to mean "inexpert." Mr. Epstein uses "amateur" in an older, more abundant sense, to signify (as the word's etymology suggests) something done out of devotion or even love. In this sense, Mr. Epstein's essay is an amateur effort, as indeed is *The Hudson Review* generally. We can think of no higher praise.

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"Modern Painters," R.I.P.

We wish that we could be as sanguine about *Modern Painters*, the well-known English art quarterly founded in 1987 by the late Peter Fuller. Mr. Fuller, who died suddenly in 1990, was a man of extraordinary energy and unstoppable passions. A robustly polemical ex-Marxist, he started *Modern Painters* to promulgate the Ruskinian aesthetic principles he had lately embraced and to oppose the headlong progress of vulgarization in the British art world. *Modern Painters*, he wrote in an editorial for the first issue, "will seek to uphold the critical imagination and the pursuit of quality in art." Mr. Fuller was particularly severe about those institutions —increasingly, the dominant institutions— of modern art that

> promote a tacky preference for the novel and fashionable, exemplified in the taste of the Saatchis, the patrons of New Art, successive Turner Prize juries, and journals like *Artscribe International*. . . . All too often, their first concern seems not to be with the good, the true, or the beautiful—but rather with the advancement of their own careers: they tend to debase and to affront public taste, rather than to challenge, or, least of all, to nurture it.

We were inevitably, and sadly, reminded of Mr. Fuller's declaration of purpose when the first-ever New York issue of *Modern Painters* recently arrived in our offices. A more thorough-going repudiation of everything that Peter Fuller stood for can scarcely be imagined. To be sure, *Modern Painters* continues to publish some intelligent criticism. But the dominant note of the magazine is now set entirely by that addiction to trendiness and shallow celebrity that Mr. Fuller warned against. Today the presiding spirit of *Modern Painters* is not John Ruskin but David Bowie, an aging rock star who has lately supplemented the sodden hedonism of androgynous rock music with the glitter of art-world chic. Mr. Bowie—who now, *mirabile dictu*, sits on the board of *Modern Painters*—is featured on the cover of the New York issue. He is joined by Jeff Koons, a grinning, kitsch-peddling artist of precisely the sort that Peter Fuller would have anathematized. Behind them, leering out at the viewer, is a typically garish, cartoonlike example of Koons's current "work." The occasion for the tableau is a conversation between Messrs. Bowie and Koons, a driveling exercise in narcissistic exhibitionism more appropriate to a Hollywood fan magazine than a serious art journal.

People in the art world first learned about the special New York issue of *Modern Painters* when they received a fancy invitation to a party at Jeff Koons's SoHo studio. The party was meant to celebrate not only publication of the special issue of *Modern Painters* but also the publication of books by two regular contributors to the magazine: a new edition of Matthew Collings's *Blimey! From Bohemia to Britpop: The London Art World from Francis Bacon to Damien Hirst* and the novelist William Boyd's biography of an American artist called Nat Tate. A few days after the party, the London newspapers were full of the news that "Nat Tate" was a fictional character and that denizens of the New York art world had "turned up in droves to . . . celebrate Tate's work, and laud Mr. Boyd's 66-page monograph." In fact, people showed up out of the morbid curiosity that celebrity inspires: the party, after all, was at Jeff Koons's studio and the great David Bowie was listed as one of the hosts. The London *Daily Mail* gleefully reported that the snobbish New York art world "had fallen victim to a well-executed, and thoroughly British, practical joke." That is true. But the practical joke for which they fell was not Mr. Boyd's fantasy but the more melancholy joke that *Modern Painters* has now become.

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Reflections on a cultural revolution: IX

The project of rejuvenilization

by Roger Kimball

The adepts of the Free Spirit did not form a single church but rather a number of like-minded groups, each with its own particular practices, rites, and articles of beliefs; and the links between the various groups were often tenuous. But these people did keep in touch with one another; and the Free Spirit was at all times recognizable as a quasi-religion with a single basic corpus *of doctrine. . . . They divided humanity into two groups—the majority, the "crude in spirit," who failed to develop their divine sensibilities, and themselves, who were the "subtle in spirit." . . . The heart of the heresy was in fact not a philosophical idea at all but an aspiration; it was a passionate desire of certain human beings to surpass the condition of humanity and to become God.*
—Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*

For us the planet was without Original Sin, designed for our sacramental pleasure.
—Timothy Leary, *Flashbacks: An Autobiography*

No account of America's cultural revolution can omit the career of Timothy Leary, "promoter, apologist, and high priest of psychedelia nonpareil," as Theodore Roszak put it in *The Making of a Counterculture* (1969). Dr. Timothy Leary, Ph.D., had his first experience of LSD in the spring of 1962 when he was forty-two and teaching in the psychology department at Harvard University. In the summer of 1963, Leary and his colleague Richard Alpert—who would later turn himself into a guru and take the Hindu name Baba Ram Dass—would be expelled from the Harvard faculty for disseminating drugs to students. But in the meantime they were sedulous in "researching" the effects of these drugs. For the previous two years, Leary and Alpert had eagerly "experimented"—to use the preferred euphemism—both on themselves and on hundreds of others with various hallucinogenic drugs, especially psilocybin. But LSD was something new and much more powerful. It had, Leary knew, been secretly tested by the CIA in the late 1950s for possible use in interrogations and unconventional warfare. In the words of an official intelligence document, LSD was "capable of rendering whole groups of people, including military forces, indifferent to their surroundings and situations, interfering with planning and judgment, and even creating apprehension, uncontrollable confusion and terror."

Leary's introduction to the drug came through an English academic named Michael Hollingshead. "On the basis of his claim to have ingested more LSD than anyone in the world," Leary recalled in *Flashbacks*, the autobiography he published in 1983 (new edition, 1990), "I invited him to stay at our house and act as a project consultant." A short while before, Hollingshead had inadvertently taken a large dose of LSD with a colleague. "They became," Leary wrote, "mystics on the spot."

Like so many apostles of mind-altering drugs, Timothy Leary was very big on the

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idea of becoming a mystic on the spot. He did it hundreds, indeed thousands, of times. Leary first sampled hallucinogenic drugs in Mexico in 1960 (more "research" for his new job at Harvard). Describing the experience years later, he wrote that

> I gave way to delight, as mystics have for centuries when they peek through the curtains and discovered that this world—so manifestly real—was actually a tiny stage set constructed by the mind. . . .
>
> Starting back to the terrace. Hello, my walk had changed to a rubber-leg slither. The room was apparently filled with invisible liquid. I undulated over to Poet Betty. Her classic face unfolded like a sunflower. She was in some sort of bliss. . . .
>
> Next came a trip through evolution, guaranteed to everyone who signs up to this Brain Tour. Slipping down the recapitulation tube to those ancient mid-brain projection rooms: snake-time, fish-time, down-thorugh-giant-jungle-palm-tree-time, green lacy fern leaf-time. . . . Hello, I am the first living thing.
>
> The journey lasted a little over four hours. Like almost everyone who has had the veil drawn, I came back a changed man.

Among other things, he discovered that "the world was divided into those who had had the experience (or were eager to have it) and those who had not (and shuddered at the possibility)."

Such pronouncements are a wearying staple of Leary's many books and pamphlets about the "mind-expanding" properties of hallucinogens. *The Psychedelic Experience* (1964), *Psychedelic Prayers from the Tao Te Ching* (1967), *How to Start Your Own Religion* (1967), *The Politics of Ecstasy* (1968), *High Priest* (1968), and on and on. They all revolve around Leary's reports of the life-changing enlightenment that he enjoyed thanks to drugs. When he was finally introduced to LSD, he found it "the most shattering experience of my life."

> I have never recovered from that ontological confrontation. I have never been able to take myself, my mind, or the social world quite so seriously. Since that time, I have been acutely aware that everything I perceive, everything within and around me, is a creation of my own consciousness. And that everyone lives in a neural cocoon of private reality. From that day I have never lost the sense that I am an actor, surrounded by characters, props, and sets for the comic drama being written in my brain.

Untangling everything that is incoherent and preposterous about such reports would require many pages. Just for starters, one might ask why, if everyone is trapped in the cocoon of a private reality, anyone bothers to write books advertising the fact. Who could read them? And if Leary's amateur solipsism were right, how could such a thing as a book even exist? Think about how much solid social reality there must be before books could be written, printed, circulated, read. And on the question of mystical illumination, what depths of credulity must be plumbed before someone could mistake a deliberate pharmacological assault on the nervous system for an experience of divine truth, a chemical emergency for an "ontological confrontation"? Among other things, such credulity reminds one of how elaborate are the excuses one can generate and embrace for the sake of a hedonistic evasion of reality. Leary's perception that he had become an actor in a comic drama of his own making has a little more to be said for it, though it would be more accurate to describe the situation he created as a tragedy with distinctly farcical elements. In any event, histrionics, not to say melodrama—not to say outright hucksterism—played a prominent part in Leary's activities from the beginning.

Long before his death in 1996 at the age of seventy-six, Timothy Leary had become an absurd, indeed a pathetic, figure. The absurdity and the pathos culminated in the gruesome theater of his death. Leary directed that his brain be cryogenically preserved "with the expectation of reanimation and brain-transplant to a healthy body

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in the future." ("It seems to me," he explained, "that the person who dies a 'natural' death is a deluded victim of state-managed suicide.") His final moments and the surgical removal of his head were captured on video tape for the edification of his acolytes.

Leary's preposterousness did not make his influence any less widespread or any less malign. His life was in many respects a cautionary tale—not least as an example of the extent to which it had become possible to be ridiculous and profoundly destructive at the same time. This in fact was an amalgam that the Sixties rather specialized in. Like many of his peers, Leary illustrated the fact that being an object of pity does not necessarily exempt someone from being also an object of censure.

His advocacy of hallucinogens was, as Theodore Roszak put it, the advocacy of a "counterfeit infinity." Roszak was himself an apologist for many aspects of the counterculture. But like many politically committed Leftists, he understood that Leary's obsession with drugs was not aiding the cause of political revolution and that his assurance that "the LSD trip is a religious pilgrimage" was a gross, psychically maiming deception—of himself, possibly; certainly of the thousands upon thousands whom he seduced with his gospel of instant ecstasy. Leary produced an endless stream of books, pamphlets, and manifestos (his annotated bibliography runs to 305 pages). But his teaching—if "teaching" is the word—is accurately epitomized in his most famous slogan: "Turn on, tune in, drop out," a pithy formula he came up with in 1966 after Marshall McLuhan (himself a false prophet of considerable influence) advised him that "your advertising must stress the religious."

Three decades on, it is difficult to recapture the peculiar intensity of Leary's presence in the 1960s and early 1970s. A popular rock band, The Moody Blues, wrote a hit song about him; he fraternized with the superchic from New York to Hollywood and San Francisco; in 1970, when he planned to run for Governor of California, John Lennon of The Beatles wrote a campaign song for him; President Nixon described him as "the most dangerous man in America." For a brief period in the mid- to late Sixties, Leary was ubiquitous: a beaming, gurulike presence at the first Love-Ins and Be-Ins, barefoot and ponytailed, dressed in white duck trousers and flowing white silk shirt, spouting such nostrums as "Laws are made by old people who don't want young people to do exactly those things young people were meant to do—to make love, turn on, and have a good time."

A bit earlier, it was Leary the clean-cut Harvard specialist who first introduced Allen Ginsberg—another self-described "student of altered states"—to psilocybin. (It was Leary also who first gave the drug to Arthur Koestler, Robert Lowell, Maynard Ferguson, and Jack Kerouac. He even traveled to Tangier to introduce it to William S. Burroughs.) Reflecting later on his experience of psilocybin with Ginsberg and two friends, he announced that "the four of us had reached a place where we were momentarily beyond social roles, beyond normal strivings. We had apparently tapped some meditative overview circuit of our brains that allowed us to share a moment of philosophic understanding." This, he concluded, "suggested exciting social applications."

Different though their backgrounds were, Leary and Ginsberg exerted a similar influence on the counterculture. By the mid-Sixties, both had emerged as iconic figures. For both men, drugs were a central part of their gospel of liberation. But drugs were not the only part; promiscuous sex was also crucial. Leary was not quite in Ginsberg's league here, but he did his best. He appropriately titles one chapter of *Flashbacks* "The Ultimate Aphrodisiac," referring to LSD. Again and again in his autobiography Leary doses himself and some friends with hallucinogens and then treats his readers to passages like this: "My eyes connected with hers. We rose as one and walked to the sun porch. She turned, came to me, entwined

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her arms around my neck. . . ." Or this, about his honeymoon in the Far East with his second wife:

> Ever since my Easter Sunday session at the Millbrook Meditation House I had been convinced that the linkage of opposites was the key to personal evolution. Nanette shared this belief that a man and a woman who learned how to shift realities in unison, moving from one level of consciousness to another together, were a powerful creative force. . . . Nanette and I had one more LSD session in the Himalayas to see if we could get fused again."

(They didn't, alas, and the marriage soon ended.)

Then there was rock music. Ginsberg and Leary both wholeheartedly embraced its Dionysian promise. Leary dedicates *High Priest* to a dozen rock groups—The Beatles, The Byrds, The Rolling Stones, etc.—as the "authentic priests, the real prophets" of "the psychedelic revolution." Finally, there was the bogus embrace of Eastern religion: the chanting, the incense, the pilgrimages to India and Tibet, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, assorted Hindu and Buddhist scriptures—a nauseating goulash of pseudo-spirituality. There was Allen Ginsberg with his finger-cymbals chanting Hare Krishna and antiwar slogans, and Leary filling his books with snippets from the *I Ching* and dismissing "the Judeo-Christian commitment to one God, one religion, one reality that has cursed Europe for centuries and America since our founding days." It was all window-dressing, really, for at bottom Leary's attitude toward religion was summed up in another chapter title in his autobiography: "Drugs Are the Origin of Religion and Philosophy." His own "church," incorporated in New York in 1966, was called the League for Spiritual Discovery—LSD for short, "an orthodox, psychedelic religion" whose "sacraments" "are psychedelic chemicals which at every turning point in human history have been provided by God for man's illumination and liberation."

The chief difference between Ginsberg and Leary was what we might call the direction of their influence. Ginsberg brought the existential sanction of bohemia: here he was, a poet, a denizen of New York's East Village, taking on the stuffy middle-class morality of white-collar America. Leary *was* white-collar America. Even if his childhood and college years were far from placid, he radiated patrician confidence and good looks. From his perch at Harvard, the young, handsome, charismatic psychologist brought the authority of the Ivy League to the ingestion of mind-altering drugs and the hedonism of the counterculture.

He also brought the authority of science—or more accurately the appearance of that authority. Looking back on his writings now, one sees that one of their most peculiar features is the oscillation between the vocabulary of science and the grammar of intoxication. Leary met few drugs he did not like. He has some mildly disapproving things to say about heroin in his autobiography: he found it a "euphoric downer" of "no appeal" but noted that his "experiments" with it were "useful in the context of my work as a drug researcher." The word "research" covered a multitude of sins. Leary was always on hand with "research projects," "content analyses," and plans to "develop a scientific classification model of the levels or circuits of the nervous system." Of course what he was really talking about was mind-shattering inebriation from the most powerful psycho-active agents known to man:

> Training centers like ours, we believed, could be set up in any medical school, in any divinity school, in the psychology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology departments of every college in the land. In another year or two anyone with philosophic ambitions and a thoughtful desire to increase intelligence could learn how to use drugs effectively. Freshman courses in college curricula could train students to activate their own nervous systems according to instructions of the manufacturers.

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It is hard to know what is best about this typical paragraph: the invocation of "training centers" or the casual reference to "anyone with philosophic ambitions." In any event, it is worth noting that Leary the "researcher" was never content simply to dispense drugs to others and record their reactions; right from the beginning, he was a participant, eagerly seizing every opportunity for intoxication, even when he experimented with psilocybin on prisoners in the Concord State Prison. ("The bowl of pills was placed in the center of the table. To establish trust I was the first to ingest.") It should be noted, too, that Leary got his wish: it really was only a year or two before college students became quite expert at "activating their own nervous systems" with drugs. There was nothing to it, really. The manufacturers didn't need to supply elaborate "instructions."

If Leary brought the authority of Harvard and the Ivy League to the counterculture, he brought it as a chastened, a dethroned authority. That is part of what made him so seductive. Leary was a Harvard professor who had seen through the "superficialities" and conventions of the hidebound academic establishment:

> I was at that time a successful robot—respected at Harvard, clean-cut, witty, and, in that inert culture, unusually creative. Though I had attained the highest ambition of the young American intellectual, I was totally cut off from body and senses. My clothes had been obediently selected to fit the young professional image. Even after one hundred drug sessions I routinely listened to pop music, drank martinis, ate what was put before me.

Leave aside the sillinesses in this passage. The important thing is that Leary had discovered how to have the best of both worlds. He could enjoy the prestige of being a Harvard professor *and* the delicious frisson of rejecting it all at the same time. His expulsion from Harvard further burnished his image: now he was a martyr as well as a witness for a truth too dangerous for "the establishment" to accommodate.

In fact, despite attaining an appointment at Harvard, Leary had always been at odds with the world. An only child, he was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1920. He describes his mother's family as dour Irish Catholic, his father's as "urban, urbane, well-to-do." (Leary's paternal grandfather was thought to be the richest Irish Catholic in Western Massachusetts.) The expected inheritance had all but evaporated by the time Leary's grandfather died, however, and this disappointment sent Leary's father—a drunken, part-time dentist—around the bend and away from the family. Still, Leary seems to have harbored warm feelings about his irresponsible father: "during the thirteen years we lived together he never stunted me with expectations."

Unstunted by expectations, Leary did not find the discipline required by school and college an easy matter. Nevertheless, he was voraciously curious and often excelled in his studies. After a year at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, he transferred to West Point. Within a year he found himself in punitive isolation and soon agreed to leave. He then enrolled at the University of Alabama, but was expelled for spending the night in the girls' dormitory. Drafted, he worked at an army hospital where he finished his B.A. and met his first wife, Marianne. He took an M.A. at Washington State University and his Ph.D. at the University of California at Berkeley. On his thirty-fifth birthday, he woke up to find that Marianne had committed suicide by shutting herself in the garage and starting the car. Leary suggests that the suicide was the result of postpartum depression—they had two children, then six and eight—though he does acknowledge that Marianne was less than happy about his long-term affair with the wife of a friend. ("For two years Delsey and I met three or four times a week. . . . We really liked each other.")

Leary worked for several years as a psychologist at the Kaiser Foundation Hospital

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in Oakland, California. In 1959, disillusioned with the profession, he quit his job and moved to Florence. It was there that he met the director of Harvard's Center for Personality Research, impressed him with words like "existential" and "transaction," and landed himself a job.

The name of Harvard naturally provided Leary's activities with a patina of respectability. It also assured that his exaltation of drugs would cause a major scandal when it finally became apparent that this young researcher was passing out powerful mind-altering substances to almost anyone who asked for them. It is difficult to say exactly which of Leary's outrages sealed his fate with the Harvard authorities. Maybe it was his collusion in the "medically supervised, double-blind pre- and post-tested" experiment of dosing thirty students with psychedelics at a Good Friday church service while thirty received placebos. (The placebos were a waste of time, Leary tells us: "After thirty minutes everyone knew who had taken the pill.") Or perhaps it was his letter, written with Richard Alpert, to the Harvard *Crimson* in the Spring of 1963 outlining plans to establish a nationwide drug research project called the International Foundation for Internal Freedom: "The national headquarters would publish a scholarly journal, . . . help locals to obtain good quality drugs, and coordinate summer workshops in Mexico."

Whatever the back-breaking straw, Leary and Alpert found themselves expelled from the Harvard faculty in the summer of 1963. The news came when Leary was "coordinating a workshop" in Mexico. Far from impeding him, though, the widely reported firing added luster to his reputation as a psychedelic guru. Leary managed to get himself deported from Mexico and the Caribbean island of Dominica that summer; but by September things were looking up. Two rich Americans lent Leary and Alpert a huge estate in Millbrook, New York, and gave them money to establish a new foundation and pursue their "studies." Millbrook, as Leary notes, soon became a preferred retreat for "jet-setters, celebrities, curious aristocrats. A weekend at Millbrook was the chic thing for the hip young rich of New York. At the same time we entertained biologists from Yale, Oxford psychologists, Hindu holy men." Soon, he was catapulted from notoriety to real celebrity. By the mid-Sixties, Leary boasted, "I had become a nationally recognized symbol of change."

Leary was also becoming a nationally recognized concern of the police. At the end of 1965, he was arrested with Rosemary, his new girlfriend, and his two children in Laredo, Texas, for possession of a small amount of marijuana. (It was actually in the possession of his daughter, but he claimed responsibility.) He was initially sentenced to thirty years in prison and a twenty thousand dollar fine.

Back in Dutchess County, New York, Leary's neighbors were exceedingly displeased by the sordid goings-on at the Millbrook estate. That winter, the estate was raided by a team from the Dutchess County sheriff's office led by G. Gordon Liddy, later of Watergate fame. In 1967, Leary moved to Los Angeles. One of his first acts was to marry Rosemary (number three of four wives). The service took place on a mountaintop in the Joshua Tree National Monument. A Plains Indian medicine man presided. "We partied until midnight," Leary recalled, and then the assembled company, "numbering fifty, dropped large doses of acid and reclined on soft ledges to talk things over with the stars."

Leary's campaign to be Governor of California two years later was interrupted by another arrest for possession of marijuana. This time, he was not only found guilty but also was remanded to jail immediately. Leary's career now rapidly devolved into melodramatic farce. In September 1970, he managed a daring escape from his minimum-security prison in San Luis Obispo. By prearrangement, he was picked up by members of the Weather Underground, one of the most violent of American radical groups. He was disguised,

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given a new passport, and bundled out of the country to Algeria, where he and Rosemary enjoyed the hospitality of the Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver, who was presiding there over a "government in exile." Not surprisingly, Leary did not get along with Cleaver and his thugs. Within a few months, he left for Geneva; pressure from the U.S. government then forced him to leave Switzerland for Afghanistan. In 1973, he was arrested at the Kabul air terminal and returned to the United States, where he was shuttled among various prisons (including a brief spell with the notorious LSD-crazed murderer Charles Manson) until Edmund Brown became governor of California and released him in 1976. After that, he became an early devotee of computers and "cyber reality" as well as a fixture on the lecture circuit, where he frequently appeared debating G. Gordon Liddy, also lately released from prison.

It is easy to dismiss Timothy Leary as a misguided crank, a period figure whose relevance disappeared with bell-bottoms and love beads. This would be a mistake. Leary was undoubtedly a crank, and he was assuredly profoundly misguided. But his example was immensely influential. His importance extends far beyond the thousands of lives he blighted with drugs. As much as anyone, he helped to change the moral temper of the times. Long after taking psychedelics ceased to be a preferred recreational pastime, the rationale that Leary provided for indulging in such drugs retained a large measure of credibility: they "increased sensitivity," even "increased intelligence," they freed one from "conventions" and produced "mystical" feelings of unbounded ecstasy. "With the aid of these drugs," Leary wrote, "I was exposing myself to the most intense emotions available to the human nervous system." In fact, he was exposing himself to a seductive counterfeit of emotion: a spiritual, soul-withering lie in capsule form. In "The Legacy of the Late Sixties," the philosopher Harvey Mansfield observes that the phrase "mind-expanding" as applied to drugs is intended to mean

> something grander than merely opening a mind previously closed by prejudice or superstition. It means actually expanding what the mind can grasp and conveys the excitement . . . [of] freeing oneself not only from conventions but even from one's nature. Man is an animal that naturally lives by conventions, so denying his conventions is denying his nature and replacing it with the desire to go beyond whatever has been fixed, crossing all boundaries, breaking all rules. The appeal of drugs is that of infinite power together with infinite desire. No doubt there is in human nature a yearning to rise above conventions, on occasion to get high. Previously this was thought necessary to control; now it was let loose among the young of the elite and invested with the moral superiority that comes from knowing that the system was corrupt.

Leary and his fellow champions of chemical emancipation helped to acclimatize our entire culture to a demand for blind emotional transport: a feeling of illumination vouchsafed by darkness. Drugs opened up one road to this goal; rock music, as Leary understood, opened up another. Allan Bloom was quite right when he noted, in *The Closing of the American Mind*, that "rock music provides premature ecstasy and, in this respect, is like the drugs with which it is allied. It artificially produces the exaltation naturally attached to the completion of the greatest endeavors—victory in a just war, consummated love, artistic creation, religious devotion, and discovery of the truth." It was hardly surprising that Bloom's attack on rock music was one of the most widely castigated sections of his book. Writing in the mid-1980s, Leary reported that some 80 percent of the American public was "currently involved in personal fulfillment projects, most of which involve some form of re-juvenilization." No doubt he was right. And that, finally, is what Timothy Leary was all about: rejuvenilization. What he offered was not greater intelligence, feeling, and sophistication, but a permanent holiday from those virtues for the sake of a delusion as toxic as it is widely embraced.

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The sense of Gertrude Stein

by Donald Lyons

"You have a foolish notion that to be middle-class is to be vulgar, that to cherish the ideals of respectability and decency is to be commonplace and that to be the mother of children is to be low. You tell me that I am not middle class and that I can believe in none of these things because I am not vulgar, common-place and low, but it is just there where you make your mistake." The speaker is Adele, a big young American girl from Baltimore; she's arguing with two rather bohemian fellow voyagers on a ship to Europe. Adele has

> thrown herself prone on the deck with the freedom of movement and the simple instinct for comfort that suggested a land of laziness and sunshine. She nestled close to the bare boards as if accustomed to make the hard earth soft by loving it. She made just a few wriggling movements to adapt her large curves to the projecting boards of the deck, gave a sigh of satisfaction and murmured "How good it is in the sun."

"They remained there quietly in the warm sunshine looking at the bluest of blue oceans, with the wind moulding itself on their faces in great soft warm chunks." Adele's companions in this Winslow Homerish scene object to her calling herself middle class, but she insists:

> "I never claimed to be middle class in my intellect and in truth . . . I probably have the experience of all apostles, I am rejected by the class whose cause I preach but that has nothing to do with the case. I simply contend that the middle class ideal which demands that people be affectionate, respectable, honest and content, that they avoid excitements and cultivate serenity is the ideal that appeals to me, it is in short the ideal of affectionate family life, of honorable business methods."
>
> "But that means cutting passion quite out of your scheme of things!"
>
> "Not simple moral passions, they are distinctly of it but really my chief point is a protest against this tendency of so many of you to go in for things simply for the sake of an experience. . . . Experience for the paltry purpose of having had it is to be both trivial and immoral. As for passion . . . you see I don't understand much about that. It has no reality for me except as two varieties, affectionate comradeship on the one hand and physical passion in greater or less complexity on the other and against the cultivation of the latter I have an almost puritanic horror and that includes an objection to the cultivation of it in any of its many disguised forms."

This is the situation, the issue, at the beginning of *Q.E.D.* (a.k.a. *Things As They Are*), Gertrude Stein's first novel, written in 1903 when she was twenty-nine, but not published until 1950, four years after her death. In *Q.E.D.*, the heroine falls for and has clandestine meetings with Helen, "the American version of the English handsome

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girl," but is foiled and frustrated by Helen's unshakable emotional and financial dependence on Mabel, "the tension of [whose] long angular body sufficiently betrayed her New England origin." Mabel illustrates half of the dictum that "it is one of the peculiarities of American womanhood that the body of a coquette often encloses the soul of a prude and the angular form of a spinster is possessed by a nature of the tropics."

Q.E.D. was written a year after—and contains an explicit allusion to ("Like Kate Croy . . .")—Henry James's *Wings of the Dove*, of which it is a kind of all-girl chamber development. Adele is, roughly, the Milly Theale to Helen's Densher and Mabel's Croy. The story ends with a strong echo of Croy's concluding "We shall never again be as we were"; Adele is alone reading a weaselly letter from Helen: "'I am afraid it comes very near being a dead-lock,' she groaned, dropping her head on her arms." *Q.E.D.*, which begins the first volume of the Library of America's new two-volume *Gertrude Stein*, is evidence that Henry James may have been at least as potent an influence on Stein as his brother William, with whom she had studied psychology at Radcliffe in the early 1890s.[1] (For Stein's life, the most pleasant sources are her own *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* from 1932 and James R. Mellow's learned and wise *Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein and Company* from 1974. Edmund Wilson's short chapter on Stein in *Axel's Castle* from 1931 remains a valuable introduction.)

Q.E.D.—for all its Jamesianness—is a remarkably original and assured performance. Also, the convictions, attitudes and moralities expressed by Adele were not mere straw men, to be knocked over and disavowed at the onset of passion. Rather, they were lifelong tenets of Stein, who always felt herself a patriotic and indeed conservative (she was anti-New Deal) American, a champion of *pudeur*, and an exemplar of domesticity. That she was to combine these predilections, which made her a happy woman, with others quite different—modernism and lesbianism—made her an artist.

After Harvard, Stein spent some time at the John Hopkins School of Medicine; it was her years in Baltimore—as well as memories of her girlhood in Oakland—that provided background for her second novel, *Three Lives*, written in Paris in 1905–6 and published in 1909. As the *Autobiography* puts it, "She had begun not long before as an exercise in literature to translate Flaubert's *Trois Contes* and then she had this Cézanne [a portrait of the painter's wife bought by her brother Leo, the Stein really knowledgeable about art] and she looked at it and under its stimulus she wrote Three Lives." Taking off from Flaubert's study of the servant Félicité, the book is a tribute to three humble women: two German servants, Anna and Lena, and a young black woman, Melanctha Herbert. All live in Bridgepoint, a fictional Baltimore. The first story, "The Good Anna," is a vivid, unsentimental picture, enlivened by a self-caricature in the person of Miss Mathilda, the vague, unworldly mistress (". . . you can't go out to dinner in that dress and next year if we live till then, I make you get a new hat, too. It's a shame Miss Mathilda to go out like that"). "The Gentle Lena" is a rather glum chronicle of suffering. It's "Melanctha," the long, central section, that makes the book. Like *Q.E.D.*, "Melanctha" tells of the irruption of passion into a sensibility that has organized itself around other values. Solid, decent Dr. Jefferson Campbell, when he comes to treat Melanctha's ailing mother, becomes fascinated by the wild, un-pin-downable girl:

> Dr. Jefferson Campbell was a serious, earnest good young joyous doctor. He liked to take care of everybody and he loved his own colored people. He always found life very easy did Jeff Campbell, and everybody liked to have him with them. He was so good and

1 *Gertrude Stein*, edited by Catharine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman; Library of America; *Volume I: Writings 1903–1932* (941 pages, $40), *Volume II: Writings 1932–1946* (844 pages, $40).

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> sympathetic, and he was so earnest and so joyous. He sang when he was happy, and he laughed, and his was the free abandoned laughter that gives the warm broad glow to negro sunshine.

He takes to Melanctha, but sees dangers in her and says, in words that recall Adele's:

> No I ain't got any use for all the time being in excitements and wanting to have all kinds of experience all the time. I got plenty of experience just living regular and quiet and with my family, and doing my work, and taking care of people, and trying to understand it. I don't believe much in this running around business and I don't want to see the colored people do it. I am a colored man and I ain't sorry, and I want to see the colored people like what is good and what I want them to have, and that's to live regular and work hard and understand things, and that's enough to keep any decent man excited.

Jeff is the Gertrude Stein figure in "Melanctha," resistant to the pull of deranging and disorienting emotion.

Jeff and Melanctha "wander" together. "Wander" seems a metaphor for sex, but perhaps for Stein it is rather that sex is a metonymic subset of wandering.

> Jeff always loved now to be with Melanctha and yet he always hated to go with her. . . . And they loved it always, more and more, together, with this new feeling they had now, in these long summer days so warm; they, always together now, just these two so dear, more and more to each other always, and the summer evenings when they wandered, and the noises in the full streets, and the music of the organs, and the dancing, and the warm smell of the people, and of the dogs and of the horses, and all the joy of the strong, sweet, pungent, dirty, moist, warm negro southern summer.

Melanctha, though, squirms away from love ("What was it that Melanctha did, that made everything get all ugly for them?") even as she articulates a rhetoric of loving: "I love you more and more seems to me Jeff always. . . . I do love you Jeff, sure yes, but not the kind of way of loving you are ever thinking it now Jeff with me. I ain't got certainly no hot passion any more now in me. You certainly have killed all that kind of feeling now Jeff in me."

This rhetoric—which, it is important to see, is neither Stein's naturalistic appropriation of black idiom nor any sort of attempt to render speech—is a sort of beautiful verbal surfing above the depths and pulls of emotion. By circling around and ever so slightly varying the expression of ideas and feelings Stein achieves a system of psychological notation that reads like a demotic parody of Henry James's fastidious was-she-thinking-A-or-B-or-C-or-D analyses. From time to time, Stein interpolates generic psychologizing or coy questions (as above), rather in the manner of Trollope, who was for her "the greatest of the Victorians": "In tender hearted natures, those that mostly never feel strong passion, suffering often comes to make them harder."

What did she think she was doing in *Three Lives*? She imagined she was writing as Cézanne had painted. Picasso, too:

> During these long poses [for her portrait] and these long walks home Gertrude Stein meditated and made sentences. She was then in the middle of her negro story Melanctha Herbert, the second story of Three Lives and the poignant incidents that she wove into the life of Melanctha were often those she noticed in walking down the hill from the rue Ravignan.

She was, she thought, dislocating the narrative and psychological architecture of the novel as painters had dismantled representationalism. The aim is an illusory one, for ultimately words without denotation are anarchic nonsense. As Picasso himself put it, "with lines and colors one can make patterns, but if one doesn't use words according to their meaning, they aren't words at all." Exactly. That said, in *Three Lives* Stein's nascent stylistic arsenal is still in touch with

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feelable life. The anguished battles between Jefferson and Melanctha, between ordering mind and disordering sensation, are moving and real; the hesitancies and incantatory repetitions of language seem genuine efforts to capture the inarticulable rhythms of the human psyche.

Stein's next large project, worked on from 1903 to 1911, was a 925-page book called *The Making of Americans*, subtitled *Being a History of a Family's Progress*. It started out as a more or less conventional narrative, rather in the Arnold Bennett vein perhaps, based on Stein's family—called the Herslands and moved from Oakland to Baltimore, renamed Bridgepoint—and centering on herself, renamed Martha and made the eldest child. But the opus lost touch with that theme; it ballooned into an omnium-gatherum of "crank philosophy, of behavioral theory gone awry [both derived from the crackpot taxonomies of Viennese writer Otto Weininger] . . . overlong, maddeningly repetitive, tedious in its rhythms," in the words of Mellow. *The Making of Americans* is omitted from these volumes, probably wrongly, since (1) it enacts proleptically and fully the long degeneration of Steinian prose, and (2) the second volume, which it might have filled, contains little of any real value or great interest as it stands.

Typing was the key. Gertrude never typed. She sat and she wrote—sometimes while carrying on unrelated conversations—in exercise books at a rate of about a page in two and a half minutes. The pages fell to the ground and were collected thence by the typist of the moment. Etta Cone, one of a pair of wealthy Jewish art-collecting sisters from Baltimore, had typed up *Three Lives* from Stein's manuscript in 1906. By 1909 there was a new, and permanent, typist at the rue de Fleurus. Alice Toklas "agreed to take on the formidable task of transcribing Gertrude's bold and often unintelligible script, a task that was to develop into a lifetime occupation." The typing of *The Making of Americans* was her first chore. Happiness had dawned on Gertrude; to celebrate it, she composed the first of her pen portraits, called "Ada" (1910), whose final paragraph begins: "She came to be happier than anybody else who was living then. It is easy to believe this. She was telling some one, who was loving every story that was charming. Some one who was living was almost always listening. Some one who was loving was almost always listening. That one who was loving was almost always listening." How nice for Stein; how disastrous for her prose. Her diction here cannot do anything interesting with happiness. The tensions, the urgencies that underlay "Melanctha" are gone; mere iteration, brooking no correction, bullies its way down the page. Toklas, uncritical of Stein's genius and servile in its recording, may have been the worst thing to have happened to the genius's language.

Many more such portraits followed: "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" (1908–10), famous for its singsong "they were gay every day, they were regular, they were gay, they were gay the same length of time every day, they were gay, they were quite regularly gay"; "Matisse" (1910); "Picasso" (1910–11); "One. Carl Van Vechten" (1913); "Susie Asado" (1912); "Guillaume Apollinaire" (1913); "Erik Satie" (1922); "Cezanne" (1923); "The Life of Juan Gris" (1927); "Virgil Thomson" (1928). All these are reprinted in volume 1; unaccountably omitted are "Braque" (1913) and "Mrs. Whitehead" (1914), among others. Indeed, it is not clear what principles have governed the selection of items that came between the two novels that open volume 1 and the autobiography that closes it. This middle section, called by the editors "Portraits and Other Short Works," includes thirty-six works written between 1910 and 1928. Nine pieces come from the important 1922 collection *Geography and Plays*; forty-four pieces from *Geography and Plays* are omitted.

The editors do reprint some pleasurable texts from these years: the short "Preciosilla" (1913), a portrait of a Spanish singer Stein and Toklas, who both adored Spain, had heard in Madrid, which ends "Toasted

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susie is my ice-cream"; "Guillaume Apollinaire," which begins with Stein's bilingual calque on the French poet's name, "Give known or pin ware"; "Marry Nettie" (1917), which may be a saucy portrait of futurist Filippo Marinetti and which ends with words made to warm the heart of every dogged Stein reader, "We all wish to go now. Do be certain that we are cool. Oh shut up"; and the hilarious capsule film scenario about an American painter in Paris during the First World War, "A Movie" (1920). But pursuing a clearly ideological view of Stein as a programmatic lesbian feminist out to forge a nonlogical, nonsequential, nonsensical feminine *écriture*, the editors make room for such turgidities as "Lifting Belly" (1915–17) and the truly stupefying forty-one-page "Patriarchal Poetry" (1927). They would have done better to reprint all of *Geography and Plays*, a (mostly) entertaining and lighthearted collection.[2] *Geography and Plays* contains such dithyrambs to domestic bliss as "Ada," "Sacred Emily," and "Pink Melon Joy" (the last unaccountably not here); these texts have become for Stein cultists cryptograms encoding carnal raptures. The only useful response to such grimly conspiratorial reductivism is to note that it deprives these aleatory texts of humor and potential for surprise.

One of the few events that, in these years, managed to obtrude itself upon the hermetically certain Stein ménage was World War I. Passionately partisan, the women stayed much in Paris, driving about in their conspicuous car, but did spend some time in 1915–16 in Mallorca, where they worried about the war's course. Out of this period came some writings—which Stein called, not entirely whimsically, "plays"—that are readable and droll and in touch with something more than dogmatic Gertrude. Among them are "Turkey Bones and Eating and We Liked It," "Please Do Not Suffer," "Mexico," "I Like It to Be a Play," "Captain Walter Arnold," and "Bonne Annee." Only the first shows up here. A postwar spell of relief work in Alsace in 1918–19 produced the witty and observant "Accents in Alsace: A Reasonable Tragedy," which ends, "In the midst of our happiness we were very pleased." "Accents" is here, although another sassily titled (Stein was terrific at titles) postwar piece, "The Psychology of Nations or What Are You Looking At," is not.

Just as she had aimed at emulating Cézanne in *Three Lives*, Stein sought in these years to "express the rhythm of the visible world" and liked to call her writing "cubist," as if language were that simplistically plastic. Her most sustained effort in this direction is *Tender Buttons* (1912), a seventy-page book divided into three sections called "Objects," "Food," and "Rooms." An odor of ponderous, emotionally fraught domesticity attends the little surrealist prose-poems in "Objects" (dresses, cushions, boxes, and hats figure significantly); a giddier, almost hysterical air pervades the seminonsensical entries in "Food." Part of one called "Orange In" runs: "Cocoa and clear soup and oranges and oat-meal. Pain soup, suppose it is question, suppose it is butter, real is, real is only, only excreate, only excreate a no since." Notice how, as Elizabeth Sewell, speaking of Lewis Carroll, explains in her invaluable *The Field of Nonsense*, nonsense fears and rejects emotion; here "pain" quickly and nervously becomes the French "pain," which summons up "butter." The third, long, undivided section, "Rooms," ends in what is perhaps Stein's loveliest flight of nonsense: "The care with which the rain is wrong and the green is wrong and the white is wrong, the care with which there is a chair and plenty of breathing. The care with which there is incredible justice and likeness, all this makes a magnificent asparagus, and also a fountain." (Again, the potential meaningfulness of "justice" must swiftly be annulled by "asparagus.") The passage is like a dream in which Proustian properties are being juggled.

2 *Geography and Plays* is available in a splendidly, if sometimes tendentiously, annotated edition from the University of Wisconsin Press (1993).

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After *Tender Buttons* and *Geography and Plays*, Stein's important work as a modernist was done. Wit, joy, surprise, and Dadaist insolence yielded thereafter unresistingly to lazy logorrhea, easy egomania. In 1932, she pulled herself up short to write the *Autobiography*, an enduring and endearing stunt of ventriloquial self-aggrandizement. Who has not been caught by its "we happy few" tone or amused by its dry putdowns ("It was then that Gertrude Stein said, Hemingway, remarks are not literature"; "During the next two or three years all the young men were twenty-six years old")? It made money. But it is an artistic giveaway, a clinching revelation of just how superficial, how arbitrary, how put-on her hermetic, Alice-type-it-up styles were. Can one imagine Joyce interrupting *Finnegans Wake* to write an anecdotal memoir of Left Bank nights? Of course, Joyce's enterprise and Stein's were antithetical: he was concerned to pack as much meaning into each word as if it were an atom, she eager to reduce words to hollow phonemes. (One can compare two Stein treatments of the same phenomenon: the straightforward description of Carl Van Vechten at the premiere of *Le Sacre du printemps* that appears in the *Autobiography*; the evocation of the same occasion in "One," where we get "an oil in a cup and a woolen coin, a woolen card and a best satin.")

In the second volume, which contains works written between 1932 and 1946, Stein can be seen turning her hand to a children's book, *The World Is Round* (1939), and to a novel in demotic dialogue articulating the somewhat cynical and pessimistic postwar views of two GIs, *Brewster and Willie* (1945–46). (Paul Fussell deglamorizing World War II in *Wartime* missed a trick by not adducing Stein's war story.) Spread over the two volumes are Stein's opera librettos for Virgil Thomson: *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1927), *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (1938), and *The Mother of Us All* (1945–46). There's a wonderful, one-page concluding item from 1946 explaining, in typically magisterial fashion, why the atomic bomb is not interesting. All of these have virtues, especially as they express a chipper toughness, an admiration for blunt courage, a very American grit that always clung to Stein. But, as the rest of the second volume shows, the writer's intellectual intensity, the forceful concentration that had once led her, in Eliot's words, to dislocate language into her meaning, had long gone.

Stein's was, like Ezra Pound's, a talent for the coruscating fragment; she lacked—or, better, allowed herself to come to lack—architectonic and ethical energy. Her best work—*Q.E.D.*, *Three Lives*, *Tender Buttons*, *Geography and Plays*, parts of *The Making of Americans*—was done by the end of the Great War. (In the *Autobiography*, she did find a rhetorical strategy for dramatizing, and hence up to a point placing, her ego.) A fascinating extremist, Stein was finally a minor artist; her status can be clarified by contrast with a major writer—and not wholly dissimilar figure—born two months earlier than she: Willa Cather.

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An early dissident: Madame de Staël

by Renee Winegarten

There is a world elsewhere.
—*Coriolanus* Act III, scene iii

Exile is a terrible fate, a source of bitterness and grief since the time of the ancient Hebrews as they sat down by the waters of Babylon and wept. In our own tormented era, a great many people have felt what it means to be forcibly cut off, perhaps forever, from their treasured familiar culture. On this theme, Anne Louise Germaine Necker, Mme. de Staël (1766–1817), the great forerunner of the modern literary and political dissidents, still has much of value to communicate. For a woman as highly strung and imaginative as she was, exile figured as grimly as death itself—and she was by no means the first to think in that way. She often remembered that, nearly a hundred years earlier, the statesman and writer Viscount Bolingbroke had associated exile and death. Her thoughts also turned to the Roman poet Ovid sent into exile by the Emperor Augustus and left to bemoan his fate among the Scythians on the shores of the Black Sea, where he died.

Tradition has it that Ovid was exiled for a poem that gave offense as well as for involvement in a sexual-cum-political scandal. Mme. de Staël's fault in the eyes of the leaders of the Committee of Public Safety in 1795, of the Directory in 1799, and, most potently, of Napoleon Bonaparte from 1800, was not sexual (though her private life and her numerous love affairs were a source of prurient gossip). It was literary and political. Napoleon condemned her to banishment from Paris and to internal exile under constant surveillance in the French provinces (so that eventually she felt driven to flee abroad). This was because she had offended him with her outspoken criticism and her writings which, he felt, undermined directly or obliquely the policies of his personal rule. Having grown accustomed to sycophancy, he was absolutely furious because she not only failed to praise his mighty exploits, but also she omitted to mention them in her books. She was used to the freedom of talk that had flourished under the ancien régime in the days immediately before the French Revolution of 1789, and so she thought she could criticize his dictatorship in private and in society with similar impunity. Whatever her virtues —and she was certainly courageous—prudence was not among them. For a long time, she did not comprehend that in Napoleon she was dealing with a new phenomenon. It was one that would prefigure many of the authoritarian tendencies familiar to the modern era.

Her indiscreet remarks and her sometimes defiant actions were perfectly well known to Napoleon through his ubiquitous spies. Even when in Germany or Russia, busily engaged in the wars, he took the trouble to be well informed about her sayings and doings. He would find time to write to Joseph Fouché, the supreme spy-

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master, then minister of police, urging him to tighten measures against "this real bird of ill omen," "this whore," as Napoleon graciously called her. Since she often conversed with his actual or putative enemies at home and abroad, in his eyes she was a seriously tiresome troublemaker, and he suspected her of actively plotting against him. He said that people always left her salon plainly less well disposed toward himself. She had offended him, and that was sufficient cause for punishment. There could be no redress against giving offense to an absolute ruler, she once observed.

She soon came to realize that others did not regard exile as so dreadful a fate. As early as 1803, she had written to a friend that "people will get used to my exile and will be surprised at my whim to extricate myself from it." That elevated and self-regarding writer, Chateaubriand, visited her at Coppet, her handsome family mansion near the shores of Lake Geneva. He expressed astonishment that a person of large means like herself, who resided in a beautiful house, attended by servants and with all the amenities of unspoiled nature around her, could be so unhappy at her banishment from Paris. He was drawn to conclude that, whereas he would be well content with the pleasures of solitude in such conditions, there were others of different temperament who could not be reconciled to it.

It was in a state of near collapse and terror that, on May 23, 1812, Mme. de Staël left Coppet, and carrying only her fan entered her carriage, ostensibly to go for a drive with her daughter Albertine. Riding alongside for a short distance was her son Auguste, who tried to cheer her with the thought that she was going (of necessity secretly and circuitously) to England, a land she had long idealized as the seat of freedom. Coppet had fallen under Napoleon's rule some fourteen years earlier when he invaded Switzerland. For many months, the local *préfet* had been limiting her movements to a few miles from her home, so that she was virtually under house arrest.

The few close friends who had ventured to visit her were in their turn punished with internal exile. (They were not always as apolitical as she averred.) Others warned her that she might well suffer the same fate as Mary Queen of Scots, who had been imprisoned for almost two decades by Queen Elizabeth I, and then beheaded. After all, it was only a few years since the duc d'Enghien had been kidnapped on foreign soil and hastily executed at Vincennes—a crime famously judged by a cynic to be a "mistake," and one sufficiently extraordinary at the time to linger in the collective memory. Indeed, her own arrest was a distinct possibility, and her fears were not illusory. In 1811 the zealous local *préfet* informed General René Savary (who had succeeded Fouché as minister of police) that the order for her arrest had not been issued "for the moment." Clearly, the authorities had imprisonment in view. It can readily be imagined how furious Napoleon and his bureaucratic underlings were when they discovered that she had managed to escape their long surveillance and constant harassment. After months of secret planning and diversionary tactics, she was embarking on the first stage of a momentous journey that was to take her across war-torn Europe, through Austria, Poland, Russia, Sweden, to her ultimate goal, freedom in England, Napoleon's bitterest foe.

Out of that perilous journey would come one of the most fascinating books of the nineteenth century, *Dix années d'exil*. The ten years of exile to which the title alludes, from 1803 to 1813, were in fact only one part of the story because she had known banishment earlier. This splendid work is a broken monument, for it is unfinished. It was written at different periods, separated by an interval of some five years. She did not live to correct the manuscript, although it was her custom to make many drafts. Part of it she removed and inserted into one of her major works, her reflections on the French Revolution, later published by her son Auguste in the year following his mother's untimely death in 1817. Her health had been de-

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teriorating, not just through her intense emotional overdrive in her often stormy personal relationships, through a difficult pregnancy when in her mid forties, and her abuse of opium, but also as a result of the constant agitation and mental stress caused by persecution and banishment.

Auguste eventually decided to publish also her account of her years of exile, but he took it upon himself to modify the style, alter the text, and cut passages that might have some risky current political implication or that referred to persons who were still living. This is the version that has largely been available until now, superseded at last by a superb new edition that is unlikely to be surpassed.[1] It even includes the "disguised manuscripts" where, fearing discovery, she concealed her views beneath allusions to the history of England so that, for instance, Mary Queen of Scots stands for the duc d'Enghien. Now, for the first time we can read the work more or less as it came from Mme. de Staël's hand.

Why is this incomplete work so telling even today? Here is a gripping personal memoir of her meetings with General Bonaparte in 1797, when he returned to Paris crowned with laurel as the great republican hero and liberator, the heir of the Revolution—an image that some could never bring themselves to renounce. (She would be distressed by the enduring admiration for Napoleon, war or no war, displayed by blinkered British fellow travelers, on meeting them in London in 1813.) In those early days, however, she also was under the spell of Bonaparte the military genius, in a manner more imaginatively and romantically intense than she was later prepared to admit. He did not respond, treating her—as he did many women whom he considered unlikely to be of use to him—with soldierly coarse and brutal misogyny. Master of the apparently sightless stare, he intimidated her to such a degree that, although she was renowned for her fascinating talk and witty repartee, she was reduced to silence. It did not help if she prepared in advance what she was going to say.

The work also tells of her growing awareness of the First Consul's monarchical ambitions and his drive to absolute power. From 1800, when she encouraged Benjamin Constant to stand up for free speech in the Tribunate, and was ostracized for her pains, she kept to her principles in mingled pride and dread. Moreover, she describes vividly the persecution she endured at Bonaparte's hands, not only in France but also in the realms he conquered and wherever fears of his displeasure predominated. Her words ring down the ages: "If tyranny only had its direct advocates on its side, it would never prosper. The astounding thing, and one that above all bears witness to the depths of human abasement, is that most mediocre men are at the service of the event. . . ." This inclination she attributed not only to weakness of character but also to the fact that mankind has a sort of need to prove fate right, in order to live in peace with it. She remarked that there are always those who are able to find philosophical reasons to be content with the powers that be.

As to the constant harassment she endured, known today down to the last petty detail from the patient research of scholars into police archives, she does not reveal the half of it. All the same, what she does relate is powerful enough in its indictment of the abuse of power. The book aims to encompass Napoleon's downfall and the establishment of a new republican regime in France. And, along the way, it is a kind of travel book whose depiction of Russia in 1812 remains memorable. She crossed the Russian frontier at Brody in Galicia shortly after the invading French armies traversed the river Niemen, and she was one of the last independent foreign observers to see Moscow before the inhabitants defiantly put it to the torch.

The fact was that her exile, however painful, opened her mind to new and fruit-

1 *Dix années d'exil*, by Mme. de Staël, edited by Simone Balayé and Mariella Vianello Bonifacio; Arthème Fayard, pages 588, 180 FF.

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ful experiences. Because of the French invasion of Russia, she was obliged to make a large detour via Kiev before she could reach Moscow. Although the country was struggling against the French invader, she was surprised at the kindness and hospitality shown her. However, she soon became aware of the vast difference between the "Asiatic" magnificence of the princes and aristocrats who entertained her in such an extravagant manner and the miserable existence of the serfs. There is no third estate here, she remarked, noting the absence of a middle class concerned with culture and enlightenment as she had known it in France. Her Russian hosts kept silent on serious matters, she reflected, because they knew that it was dangerous to express a personal opinion.

In St. Petersburg, she conferred with British agents like Lord William Bentinck; with diplomats like Baron Heinrich von Stein, one of the leading German opponents of Napoleon's regime, whom she inspired; and John Quincy Adams, future president of the United States. Czar Alexander I and his family welcomed her as an honored guest, and he discussed public affairs with her as an equal. He was in his liberal phase, and he assured her that he intended to improve the condition of the serfs at an opportune moment. Later, in London, when a lady ill-advisedly spoke to her about the existence of a free society in Russia, Mme. de Staël swiftly countered that she had never known freedom to coexist with serfdom. Her book is more flattering to Alexander than her true opinions would suggest. In general, her comments were acute. She observed that though there was much imitation of French, German, and British modes and manners, it was only skin deep.

What lay at the root of her opposition to Napoleon's regime? He once said that he found the French crown lying on the ground and that he quite simply picked it up. Crowned emperor in 1804, he created a Bonapartist aristocracy and a court, and placed his brothers and sisters on the thrones of Europe. That was not what the daughter of Jacques Necker—Louis XVI's reformist minister of finance, whom she had seen welcomed with ecstasy by the populace in 1789—ever anticipated. What need was there now, after the regime of the Bourbons had been abolished at such a high cost in blood, for a new royalty and a new caste? Some of her friends among the old nobility had hastened to renounce their privileges at the beginning of the Revolution. She would remain faithful to the generous libertarian ideals that had inspired them and that had been betrayed by the Jacobin Terror of 1793–4. Then there were Napoleon's endless wars with their terrible casualties. When thousands of his soldiers lay dead on the battlefield, she heard how Napoleon had insouciantly remarked that one night in Paris would make up the numbers. He liked to shock with his brutal remarks and let everyone know who was master.

The Corsican-born General Bonaparte did not care for intellectuals and thinkers in general (*idéologues* as some were then known), whereas for Mme. de Staël the ability to think for oneself was preeminent. When advised to be more discreet, she replied, "It is the truth, it is what I think and I shall say so." He particularly disliked women who took an interest in political affairs, and that distaste necessarily embraced Mme. de Staël, who was fascinated by politics. As a very young girl, she had listened intently to the eminent political figures and the leading *philosophes* who frequented her mother's salon. Even then, she had contributed not a little to the conversation, much to the disapproval of Mme. de Genlis, that critic of her upbringing and stickler for social niceties.

The art of conversation, supreme refinement of eighteenth-century French civilization, as Mme. de Staël knew it in the salons of Paris, was as necessary to her as the air she breathed. It was not to be mistaken for mere idle chatter or regarded simply as a diversion, entertaining though it might prove. Without concern for distinctions of

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rank, gifted people met together in the salons to discuss with ease and wit every kind of topic. She knew men who were not great readers but who became knowledgeable and cultivated through their contact with the salons. Napoleon was familiar with each person's weakness, and he had no trouble in finding hers. Most people he could win by their desire for preferment, by awarding them lucrative posts and high-sounding titles. Mme. de Staël could not be corrupted in that way. Her real weakness, though, was her acute susceptibility to boredom and melancholy that made her long for the company of her friends, for discourse and discussion. These helped to cover the dark chasm of nothingness that might appear at any moment. By condemning her to live forty leagues from Paris, in some provincial town like Auxerre that she called a veritable Scythia, Napoleon found exactly how to make her suffer.

She was open to attack, too, on the ground of nationality. Born in Paris, naturally she always considered herself to be French. Many French people, though, did not regard her as one of themselves, and journalists (who were mostly on Napoleon's payroll) encouraged them in their prejudice. That kind of disinclination to accept certain categories of people born in France as genuine citizens was to persist into the Vichy regime and beyond. Her parents were both Swiss-born Protestants long resident in France. Her father had loyally served the Catholic crown without too much ado about his nationality and religion, even if these were sometimes called into question. Matters were complicated for her when, on her marriage to a Swedish diplomat, she became Swedish herself. Sometimes, of course, she found it expedient to make use of this when in a tight corner. It enabled her to help friends to escape to Switzerland during the Terror.

On her husband's death, as the French-born widow of a foreigner, she should have been able to revert to being French. In her manner and outlook, she was French to her fingertips, as writers who met her, like Goethe and Schiller and others in Weimar or Berlin, or Byron in London, were agreed. Yet this Corsican general, born "Buonaparte" in Ajaccio in 1769 (a mere three months after the French finally defeated the Corsican patriots), ruled indisputably over France. There was galling irony here in the fact that, though born in Paris, she was forced to flee by order of a man "less French than I."

Besides, she could not believe that she, Necker's daughter, the celebrated author of novels like *Delphine* and *Corinne*, of influential works on literature and on the passions, writings that had created a great stir throughout Europe, could be treated in this cruel way. She had mistakenly believed that her fame was her defense. She was a child of the Enlightenment, after all: she believed in reason and progress, in the high ideals of freedom and fairness that had inspired the eighteenth-century movement for the reform of many abuses. In benighted quarters today, the Enlightenment is under attack as the purlieu of self-interested imperialist white males, despite the fact that—however imperfect, like all human endeavors—it sought disinterestedly to promote toleration and justice for all. Often purchased at great personal cost, these were, and remain, the values of a civilized society. In their light, the authoritarian regime of Napoleon seemed to Mme. de Staël to be an aberration. Surely Bonaparte must be amenable to reasoned argument.

Such a notion has endured as the great liberal delusion. There are always those who are not amenable to reason, or who choose evil as their good. Following Ovid, who addressed poems of complaint to Rome (and has been criticized for self-pity as a result), she went on writing embarrassing letters of self-justification, presenting her case—not without a certain casuistry at times—in a manner that seemed eminently reasonable to her. True, the situation was not simple and clear-cut. There were people she knew well in Napoleon's entourage whom she engaged to intercede on her be-

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half, notably his elder brother Joseph, her lifelong friend (who, she says in *Dix années d'exil* in farfetched partisanship, was forced against his will to be king of Spain). All such effort proved vain: the emperor was adamant.

A woman of penetrating insight, gifted as she well knew with an analytical mind and the impressive ability to deduce general ideas from her observations, she was also the victim of blindness where Napoleon was concerned. For a long time, she thought he just wanted to frighten her into submission. Indeed, not until 1810, when Napoleon personally gave orders for the destruction of all copies of *De l'Allemagne*, her epoch-making book on German culture, did she begin to realize that his aim was to silence her, or worse. It was not so much a question of the nature and significance of his form of authoritarianism, which she understood and made evident better than most: it was rather, for a while, her failure to grasp the full extent of it.

This combination of insight and blindness would eventually lead her to an impasse. France was at war, yet she believed that she could now fight Napoleon while, as it were, separating him and his supporters from the fate of France itself. It was as if, despite all her criticism of their baseness and barbarity, she could ultimately ignore his numerous committed followers. Napoleon's wholehearted adherents must be "Corsicans" or "Africans" like him, not true Frenchmen. As she saw it, the allies would defeat the tyrant, and France would at once return to the body of civilized nations, rather as though the entire Napoleonic era and its wars had not intervened. She did not see that in victory the Allies would exact an extremely heavy price in reparations, and that France would suffer defeat as well as Napoleon.

It was at a lavish entertainment on Prince Naryshkin's country estate overlooking the gulf of Finland, when a toast was proposed to Anglo-Russian victory over the French, that she suddenly realized her view was not shared. She protested, and would drink only to the defeat of the Corsican despot. She did not foresee the consequences of her fight to topple Napoleon. Given her distaste for the Bourbons, she did not want their return. Consequently, she ardently promoted the cause of General Bernadotte, now Crown Prince of Sweden, as the republican leader of integrity to replace Napoleon. Despite her advocacy, few were converted for long to the cause of the procrastinating Bernadotte, and in 1814 the Allies restored the Bourbons to the French throne in the person of Louis XVIII. In a sense, then, her passionate practical activity was to be frustrated, and on her return to France one of the bitterest shocks of her life was to see the Cossacks encamped on the Champs-Elysées. Her more lasting contribution lay elsewhere as she battled against political fanaticism. She envisaged a body of intellectuals united across frontiers in "the cult of truth." Until recently, the values for which she strove formed an essential part of the civilized humane ideal.

Napoleon later remarked to his recalcitrant younger brother Lucien: "I was wrong. Mme. de Staël raised more enemies against me during her exile than she would have done in France." In her book, she presents herself as the victim, not as the tireless active opponent, but Napoleon himself knew better, and it was not often that he admitted having made a mistake. She provoked the lion. He pushed her beyond endurance. They are like two models of the endlessly repeated struggle between imagination and humanity on the one hand, and the abuse of power on the other. In the conflict between sword and spirit, it is the writer who ultimately emerges as the moral victor. In that light, passing fantasies about the nonexistence of the author and modish nihilistic theories about truth that undermine humanist values pale into insignificance.

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Poems *by William Logan & John Foy* & translations from the German of Goethe *by Martin Greenberg*

The old burial ground

March's bitter morning thawed
the frozen skin of the sound
as Harvard's gothic shadow fell
upon the burying ground.

Snow in its gelid costume dressed
the icy stand of birch
where the tilted gravestones shelved
against the Methodist church.

The leafless birches sank within
the shallow swamp of snow,
a Japanese rice-paper screen's
calligraphy aglow,

like great blue herons stalking
carp in silent pools
beneath the melting icicles'
dripping, glassy jewels.

The birches formed their rank above
the waters of paradise,
warming the gravestones' chiseled names
in Dante's lake of ice.

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On standing pools wind shivered
  over the traitorous dead,
where starving Ugolino gnawed
  Archbishop Roger's head.

The winter's sculptured rites of snow,
  like glittering evidence,
looked forward to the crocuses
  teasing the iron fence,

the mourners each spring resurrected
  to words no longer said;
but memory of the dead can never
  resurrect the dead.

The promises the living swear
  betray their long decrease—
the mourner's lie In Memory Of,
  the fraud of Rest in Peace,

where buried on this sacred ground,
  in frozen, barren earth,
lie the distant soiled past
  and frenzied rage of birth.

—William Logan

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The disappearance of Saint-Exupéry

Beyond the airfield, near Chelles,
a farm and poplars gesture in the heat.
You dream, in your way, of Senegal,
and we sit by the hangar, all too aware
of the indignities of flightlessness.
We watch the bright planes
coming in, heading off,
as though this were all a game.
The day drones, and the wind picks up
as it did for that final mission
of Saint-Exupéry, a man versed
in aerial contingencies.
What a clean departure from the earth,
to disappear silently from tracking systems.
A routine flight from Corsica,
the airstrip at evening, the first lights,
his leather jacket open, hanging down.
Then the night, the Mediterranean,
the pilot in his craft, rising.

—John Foy

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Ein Quidam sagt: "Ich bin von keiner Schule;
Kein Meister lebt, mit dem ich buhle;
Auch bin ich weit davon entfernt,
Dass ich von Toten was gelernt."
Das heisst, wenn ich ihn recht verstand:
Ich bin ein Narr auf eigne Hand.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Vom Vater hab ich die Statur,
Des Lebens ernstes Führen,
Vom Mütterchen die Frohnatur
Und Lust zu fabulieren.
Urahnherr war der Schönsten hold,
Das spukt so hin und wieder;
Urahnfrau liebte Schmuck und Gold,
Das zuckt wohl durch die Glieder.
Sind nun die Elemente nicht
Aus dem Komplex zu trennen,
Was ist denn an dem ganzen Wicht
Original zu nennen?

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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Herr X says "There's no school or group can claim me,
I don't court big names, call no one dear master,
Nor have the dead a single thing to teach me,
I go my own way, don't need any mentor."
—That is, unless I quite mistake his meaning:
He's a fool and it's all his own doing.

—translated from the German
by Martin Greenberg

From father I get my physique,
Also my earnest nature;
My story-telling bent, glad heart
I have from my dear mother.
Great-grandpapa liked pretty girls,
It shows up in me also;
Great-grandmama loved gold and jewels,
A smack of that's in me, too.
So if one's a complex of traits
Inborn and indivisible,
What's there to call your own, poor wretch,
What's in you that's original?

—translated from the German
by Martin Greenberg

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Theater

Camping-up fascism

by Mark Steyn

There's a story of a *Sound of Music* production-meeting where someone nervously wondered whether the show wasn't just a teensy bit controversial. "You mean," said Richard Rodgers, "it might upset people who like Nazis?"

Upsetting people who like Nazis is something even the New York theater's prepared to do, as witness the current crop of ostentatiously swastikaed revivals: *The Diary of Anne Frank* (at the Music Box), *Cabaret* (at the Kit Kat Klub), and *The Sound of Music* itself (at the Martin Beck). But even the one corner of our recent past on which an apparent consensus holds is not an impregnable fortress: the sturdiest play is no more than tempting *Lebensraum* for the more ambitious theatrical imagination. Even something as apparently straightforward as Anne Frank's diary has passed through, among other hands, the Stalinist palms of Lillian Hellman.

The three revivals concern themselves with different stages of Nazi progress: the last days of Weimar, the Anschluss of Austria, the occupation of the Netherlands. All of them are one stage removed from American experience (and British, for this *Cabaret* is a London import). But that doesn't mean you don't hear other axes being ground, rather than the Axis being ground: thus, in the new coda to *Cabaret*, the stars of the Berlin nightclub are dispatched to the gas chambers wearing both a yellow star and a pink triangle, not necessarily in that order. In all three productions, the Nazis are the bad guys. What there seems to be little agreement on is what they're lined up against: in *Anne Frank*, the Nazis threaten normality; in *The Sound of Music*, they threaten aristocratic sophistication; in *Cabaret*, decadence.

Cabaret's origins lie in Christopher Isherwood's experiences in the Weimar Republic, specifically those involving a singer he chose to call Sally Bowles. She first appeared in his story "Goodbye to Berlin" (1939), which formed the basis for John van Druten's play *I am a Camera* (1951), which was turned into a film (1955), which was re-adapted for the stage as a protean Hal Prince (semi-) concept musical (1966), which was re-filmed as a fully fledged Bob Fosse concept musical (1972). Across six decades, a remorseless ratchet effect has been at work: Sally spends less and less time in her relationship with her writer friend—the Isherwood character—and more and more time in the nightclub. For what it's worth, Isherwood's chum Stephen Spender once told me that Liza Minnelli's Sally Bowles wasn't much like the Sally he'd known: "All that smoking," he sighed. "We couldn't afford to ply her with cigarettes. And why did she keep saying 'Divine decadence'? I suppose that's what people do in films."

I doubt whether Sir Stephen would be any more impressed by his friend's latest reincarnation. *Cabaret* is now not just a concept, but an experience: the old Henry

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Miller's Theatre, a distinguished porno house and disco club on 43rd Street, has been renamed the Kit Kat Klub for the duration. If you want to go to a theater pretending to be a porno club, then this is the joint for you. Life is a cabaret, old chum, and you are in it, sitting at your little round table, ordering overpriced drinks from saucily clad waitresses. Just remember, if you're booking by phone, ask for a table near the back; otherwise you're liable to be plucked from your seat and pulled up on stage for a dance with the Emcee, a cadaverous transvestite junkie played by Alan Cumming. I speak from experience in this regard, since on the first night of this production at the Donmar Warehouse in London I was the chap Cumming's eye alighted on for his Act Two opener. "Let me lead," he hissed in my ear as we twirled cheek to cheek before a celebrity audience. "Forget it," I snarled, happy to play Fred but drawing the line at Ginger. I got a huge cheer at the end of the number and several good reviews the following morning, including a rave from *The Observer*.

Five years on, I wouldn't say my performance was the highlight of the production, but I find it hard to nominate any alternative contenders. Mendes and co. continually point out what they see as the fatal flaw in Fosse's movie: Liza Minnelli is too good a singer to play a bad singer. But, at the Donmar, Jane Horrocks demonstrated the limitations of this kind of literalism: she was too bad a singer to play a bad singer. The only way she could manage the title song was to rework it as a kind of nervous breakdown, where the number itself literally breaks down. If you're determined enough, you can get away with it, but you do a disservice to the specificity of the song: "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" would have worked just as well.

At the time, Mendes was dating Miss Horrocks. But that's all over, so for New York his new leading lady is Natasha Richardson, daughter of Tony Richardson and Vanessa Redgrave. Given that Miss Richardson's father was a gay man who died of AIDS and her mother is a self-proclaimed Marxist revolutionary, Miss Richardson would seem to be an almost eerily apt embodiment of the production's marriage of decadence and totalitarianism. In this latest incarnation, Sally Bowles is a talentless cokehead; her hair is cheaply bleached, poorly cut, and dirty; unlike Liza's long green nails, hers are short and chewed. That said, she's about the best looking thing in the production: the Kit Kat Girls are otherwise bruised, pock-marked dumplings in soiled underwear.

Hand in hand with Sally's transformation over the decades has been the evolving sexuality of her leading man. In 1966, Clifford Bradshaw, a struggling Pennsylvania writer teaching English in Berlin, was straight; by 1972, he was bisexual; in the 1987 Broadway revival, he was gay. A decade later, he's still gay, and so's everyone else—not just Clifford, but also Ernst, the young Nazi at Clifford's rooming house; the Emcee, naturally; Bobby and Victor at the Kit Kat Klub; and most of the gentlemen and ladies of the chorus. The only two unqualified heterosexuals in the Third Reich would seem to be Clifford's landlady Fraulein Schneider (Mary Louise Wilson) and Herr Schultz (Ron Rifkin), the Jewish fruit merchant to whom she is briefly engaged. They're not made to wear yellow stars or pink triangles, but metaphorically they're labeled as gray squares: Mendes and his co-director-choreographer, Rob Marshall, have no interest in these token straights, which is why Rifkin wanders around giving a sober, naturalistic performance that seems to have ambled in from another play entirely.

In a way, these two characters no longer belong. In 1966, *Cabaret* was, structurally speaking, bisexual. Half of it inclined to the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical play: naturalistic dialogue scenes leading into songs that expressed the characters' feelings; a serious principal romance (Sally and Clifford) plus a humorous secondary one (Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz). But the other half of the show pointed else-

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where, toward the concept musicals of the Seventies: in the Kit Kat Klub, Joel Grey's leering Emcee introduced insinuating, vamping parodies of 1930 song forms that seemed to comment obliquely on developments in the outside world. Fosse's film took this further, eliminating the "book" songs—the R&H songs—and the romantic subplot and retaining only the commentative nightclub songs, presided over by the Emcee, his role now significantly expanded. A logical conclusion, you might think. But it seems it wasn't a conclusion at all.

In Mendes's production, the Emcee has usurped the entire drama: life *really* is a cabaret, old chum. Fraulein Schneider and Schultz and Clifford are all in it, their scenes and soliloquies now just another number. In 1966, Jack Gilford (as Schultz) proudly held out a pineapple to Lotte Lenya as she sang "It Couldn't Please Me More"—a textbook "charm song." Now, during their duet, it's Alan Cumming who holds the pineapple, smirkingly stroking it, and the moment is tainted: its sweet modesty has been mocked, because you know the only use Cumming's character would have for a pineapple is as a prickly, chunky sex aid. After all, that's what everything else is to him.

Mendes declares his approach with Cumming's entrance. He's wearing blue eyeshadow, blood-red lipstick, black boots, and a long leather coat. You know from his wiggling and thrusting that he can't wait to whip the coat off and show you what's underneath: there's a mid-chest bow tie attached to a crotch-hugging parachute whose white straps contrast with his brightly rouged nipples and purple bruised torso. Very nice. But what do you do next? Prince, on stage, and Fosse, in the film, allowed both the decadence and the terror to creep up on you. Mendes rubs your face in it from the word go: life is a camp old gay, old chum! In 1966, the first act was relatively light, almost musical comedy, until the final scene, the engagement party for Schultz and Fraulein Schneider: one of the guests strikes up with the beguilingly innocent, folkish "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," and, only as everyone joins in, does its tone become more forceful and strident; Ernst takes off his coat and, for the first time in the show, we see a swastika armband. Curtain.

Mendes has no time for such subtleties. In his first-act finale, the swastika has been redeployed and now appears as a tattoo on the Emcee's bared buttock. Thirty years ago, Joel Grey's androgynous Emcee sang a song about being lucky enough to have "Two Ladies"—and in 1966 that was quite naughty enough. Now, one of Cumming's "Two Ladies" is a man in drag and all three scamper behind a sheet to simulate innumerable sexual practices including what gay men refer to as "fisting." (If you need to ask, consider yourself lucky.) I hate to be a pedant, but most experts in the field identify fisting as a fairly recent innovation, "the first original sex practice in centuries," according to John Heidenry in *What Wild Ecstasy: The Rise and Fall of the Sexual Revolution* (Simon and Schuster, 1997). There is no mention of it whatsoever in ancient erotica, the writings of Sir Richard Burton, or the Kinsey Report. Marco Vassi, a contributor to *Screw* and an acknowledged expert in the field, first came across it one Saturday night in 1969 in the orgy room of the St. Mark's Baths in New York: none of the other dozen witnesses had ever seen such an act before. Its simulation in a play laid in 1929 and 1930 seems to me wholly anachronistic.

I make this point because it's highly revealing of Mendes's production: it's about the obsessions of *his* time, not theirs. Clearly, parts of Greenwich Village in the Nineties have nothing to learn from the Weimar Republic about decadence. Besides, Weimar decadence is, to a certain degree, a bit of posthumous revisionism: in Weimar Berlin, couples danced to soupy saxes and syrupy strings sawing their way through "My Blue Heaven," just like they did in Paris, London, or Buffalo. But that authentic soundtrack was obliterated by the success of the 1950s off-Broadway production

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of Weill and Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* and the original *Cabaret*, with its Weill-like vamps. Just as Kander and Ebb imposed a musical caricature on the period, so Mendes has now imposed a moral one.

The question is: to what end? There is a theory that the depravity of Weimar Germany provoked the rise of the Nazis. Well, up to a point: there wasn't much depravity in the suburbs and rural areas, but there was runaway inflation. Besides, does Mendes really wish to lend credence to that theory? If decadence leads to fascism, most people would take the view that they'd rather these Kit Kat types kept their nipples unrouged and their buttocks untattooed and cut out the fisting and thereby spare the rest of us the Holocaust, the Blitz, the Siege of Leningrad, etc.: it seems a small price to pay. In the production's final, meretricious tableau, the Emcee is breathing his last in the gas chamber, his lurid garb replaced by death-camp stripes, enlivened only by his Jewish star and pink triangle. Mendes is presumably inviting our sympathies for the victims of Nazi "homophobia," no matter that it's a piece of frivolous piggybacking on the Holocaust. Yet he's spent two hours telling us that Weimar decadence led inexorably to Nazi tyranny, and that decadence is principally homosexual in character.

As Mel Brooks's "Springtime for Hitler" recognized, Broadway and Nazism have certain qualities in common: Hitler's Germany was a bad musical—crudely manipulative, robotically choreographed, reducing individual characters to one faceless chorus performing in unison. The subject ought not to be beyond the vocabulary of the theater, but dealing with real totalitarianism requires a certain sensitivity to the potential totalitarianism of your own form. Mendes's sledgehammer approach is effective at a certain level: it shocks, it dazzles, it seduces, but its tricks are for the most part shallow and exhibitionist and subject to the law of diminishing returns. I've barely mentioned the authors—John Kander (music), Fred Ebb (lyrics), Joe Masteroff (book), all still alive and kicking—because, to a large part, they're invisible in this production. Mendes has pushed *Cabaret* to an extreme parody of itself, positing a choice that is not only false but banal: decadence versus totalitarianism. Perhaps he means us to draw contemporary parallels—the abandon of the Seventies followed by repressive Reaganism: that'd make as much sense as anything else. Mendes's production ostensibly takes its cue from the Emcee. In fact, it's much closer to Sally Bowles: like her, its desire to shock incessantly reflects mainly its naïveté and desperation.

A couple of blocks north, the rethinking is more modest, but Susan H. Schulman's revival is nevertheless being touted as "the dark *Sound of Music*," a daunting oxymoron that few directors would attempt. Even people who don't like Nazis wouldn't find much to object to in the 1959 original or the 1965 film: indeed, it would be perfectly possible to watch both versions and barely be aware that it's about Nazis at all. In the text, no one makes any principled objections to the Third Reich. Even Baron von Trapp's are never fully articulated, though they motivated him to walk his family up the Alps and into Switzerland. As I understand it, in real life he was mostly irked by the vicissitudes of fate: after the Great War, the Hapsburg Empire lost its coastline and, so to speak, the tide went out on his naval career; a hero of the Imperial Navy in the shrunken rump of modern Austria was a bit like an Arctic explorer in the Sahara—impressive credentials, but there's no call for it.

It was Abe Burrows who observed that a character who doesn't sing in a musical isn't really in the show. Likewise, a subject that isn't sung about can't really be said to be part of the show. The only time Rodgers and Hammerstein address the impending Anschluss directly is in a three-word couplet:

Be wise
Compromise.

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But with most of these characters—as, indeed, with most Austrians in 1938—compromise is so reflexive it can hardly be described as such. This is the paradox of *The Sound of Music*: by not addressing Nazism directly, it winds up addressing it far more accurately than Mendes's *Cabaret*. For what could be more historically honest than the blithe indifference of the Captain's charming, cultured friends? "What's going to happen is going to happen," jokes Max. "Just make sure it doesn't happen to you." No one mentions Jews, never mind pink-triangled fags: after all, as Fraulein Schneider sings in *Cabaret*, "So What?" This is the instinctive response of civilized Europe: the fatalistic shrug of a morally deadened culture. It's why western Europeans elected Communists to Parliament even *after* the fall of the Berlin Wall; why, after declaring "the hour of Europe has come," they stood by and let the Serbs ethnically cleanse Bosnia; why even today on the Quai d'Orsay the French political class finds it easier to do business with a sly, worldly wag like Saddam than with the U.S. So what?

There's a song in *The Sound of Music* that audiences tend to forget, called "No Way to Stop It." It was dropped from the sugary film, a film whose grosses were so spectacular they seem to have retrospectively sugar-coated Rodgers and Hammerstein's entire catalog. But, looking forward to the number during intermission, a friend asked me if it was about how you couldn't stop Nazism. Not really, I explained. Instead, it's about the *irrelevance* of Nazism, about how what counts is . . . yourself:

> So every star and every whirling planet
> And every constellation in the sky
> Revolve around the center of the universe
> A lovely thing called I!

And that's why thousands cheered when the Germans marched into Austria without a shot being fired, and everyone else just shrugged. One could argue that *The Sound of Music* shows a far shrewder understanding of 'tween-wars Austria than, say, the victorious Allies who retrospectively declared the country to be "the first victim of the Nazis"—a jest that can still bring a smile to Vienna's handful of surviving Jews.

But, of course, that's not how we think of *The Sound of Music*. We mock it instead for its lethal cocktail of sentimentality and earnestness: why would anyone, in a list of "My Favorite Things," even notice a bright copper kettle, never mind cherish it? What kind of warped imagination would conjure, as the heroine does in the title song, the bizarre concept of "a lark who is learning to pray," never mind wish to be one herself? In fairness to the the show, it is not the film: in Ernest Lehman's screenplay, the von Trapps get away because the nuns take the spark plugs out of the Nazis' cars. "You must really need the money," Burt Lancaster told Lehman in the Fox commissary. But, in the stage play, Liesl's boyfriend Rolf—the one who's "seventeen going on eighteen"—stumbles on the von Trapps during the search of the abbey. He cries out to his fellow Nazis and then, as his eyes meet Liesl's, momentarily recovers his humanity; there's no one here, he tells his comrades. One version is celluloid nuns with a bad case of the cutes; another is the typically Hammersteinian notion of redemption.

What's missing is the connection between characters and setting. *South Pacific* is not "about" the Second World War but its conflicts are mirrored in the fraught relationships of the principals: the internalization of the landscape. Susan Schulman's "darkening" consists mostly of playing up the Captain's romantic options—the naïve, youthful Maria versus the older, cynical Elsa—as a political choice also. As Elsa readily concedes, she's too jaded for love:

> How can I show what I feel for you. . . ?
> I cannot die like Camille for you
> How Can Love Survive?

She and the Captain are too rich, too mature, too confident to *need*. But, as Miss Schulman sees it, someone with no roman-

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tic idealism is unlikely to have any political idealism either. In the film, Elsa leaves because it's obvious the Captain loves Maria; here, she leaves because he stubbornly refuses to accommodate the Nazis. It's a forced reading that diminishes the show's enchantment without substituting anything in return, but after *Cabaret* it seems refreshingly sane.

The hardest temptation for the Anglo-American dramatist to resist is to impose his own moral revulsion on the peoples of Central Europe; the most difficult thing to hold onto is the normality of it all. In that sense, the most striking image in any of these revivals is the least flamboyant. Anne Frank's diaries of life in her attic hideaway were originally adapted by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, a couple of Hollywood professionals whose credits include *It's a Wonderful Life*. For the 1955 production, they wrote a noisy entrance for the Gestapo: first, the mysterious absence of the Franks' landlord for three days; next, the insistent ringing of the telephone, alerting them that *something* is going on; then the clump of heavy boots is heard downstairs, the thud of a rifle butt, the door buzzer, a second buzz, the door being beaten down, and shouts in German. In Wendy Kesselman's revision and James Lapine's staging, all that's gone: the BBC has announced the D-day landings; the Frank and Van Daan families, after their years of increasingly tetchy confinement, are relieved and wearily jubilant—liberation is at hand. And, as they anticipate it, they and we become aware that two Gestapo officers are at the top of the stairs and in the room. At the height of their joy, it is all suddenly over.

Whether or not this is how it really happened, it's certainly more potent dramatically: no clatter, no incidental score, the terror just unobtrusively materializes in the room. Whatever its general truth, it's also particularly suited to Nazi occupation in particular: it hangs in the air, it seeps through the walls. Unlike the Nuremberg-or-bust design extravagances of *Cabaret* and *The Sound of Music*, Lapine accomplishes far more with one small swastika armband.

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Art

Prud'hon at the Metropolitan

by Karen Wilkin

The good thing about revisionist art history, besides its providing desperate graduate students with topics for theses, is that it broadens our understanding of the past by adding subtlety to oversimplified conceptions. At best, revisionism allows us to reconsider serious, gifted practitioners who have been eclipsed by shifts in taste or changes of fashion; at worst, it dredges up forgotten artists who have little to recommend them but their obscurity. Either way, though, it is useful to be reminded that art history is not a tidy progression of easily categorized "isms," but (the undeniable phenomena of period and national styles notwithstanding) something far more interesting: a messy, unstable accumulation of individual efforts. I am thinking of a phrase used by the late E. C. Goossen—always a perceptive art historian and critic—to admonish colleagues who grouped things too neatly for his taste: "No movements, only artists!"

But movements—which is to say, generalizations—are far easier to deal with than individuals. And oddball artists, artists whose efforts do not lend themselves readily to generalization, are sometimes overshadowed by others whose work seems more obviously typical of a given period. I am aware that the idea of being "characteristic" is highly subjective and variable, but there are artists who appear to define the desiderata of an era, either because their work is so powerful or because it conforms to our (culturally and chronologically determined) preconceptions. For many of us, I suspect, especially for those of us whose grasp of history is bound up with the history of art, our conception of the past—France in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, for example—is inextricably linked to particular, iconic images. The irresponsible frivolity of the ancien régime is defined by Fragonard's elegantly dressed young women flirting or amusing themselves on swings or by Boucher's remarkably worldly Venuses at their toilettes. The aspirations of the Revolution are embodied by David's austere, moralizing images of antique high-mindedness, while his polished portraits of Napoleon stand for the chilly splendor of the Empire—although the icy formality that these crisply drawn, sleekly painted emblems suggest is somewhat tempered by that warmer, albeit unfinished, portrait of the reclining Madame Récamier. These convenient illustrations do not provide, of course, a very exhaustive view of an extraordinarily complex period marked by dramatic transformations of (among other things) social, political, and aesthetic values. To make matters worse, for many of us, our historical image bank not only goes fast-forward from Fragonard and Boucher's Rococo *pâtisserie* to David's republican rigor and imperial glamour, but also skips from there ahead to Géricault, Delacroix, and Romantic yearning. What about everything in between?

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Visitors to the Metropolitan Museum this spring will be able to fill in the blanks, thanks to a meticulously researched exhibition of Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, a now obscure artist who, in many ways, turns out to be a kind of missing link connecting these apparently disparate approaches.[1] (The exhibition's fully illustrated catalogue, with complete entries for each work, is not just a record of the show, but a useful summary of Prud'hon scholarship, with an exhaustive chronology.) Prud'hon lived from 1758 to 1823. Those dates are significant. Like David, who was ten years his senior, Prud'hon was born during the reign of Louis XV and was a mature, fully formed artist when Napoleon came to power. He died two years before David, only a year before Géricault came to his premature end. In other words, while Prud'hon's early career overlapped that of Fragonard, he lived to see that harbinger of the Romantic era, Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*, hanging in the Salon of 1819, where Prud'hon himself exhibited two portraits and an assumption of the Virgin surrounded by translucent hosts of angels. Had Prud'hon lasted only a year longer, he could have seen Delacroix's *Massacre at Chios* in the Salon of 1824.

Given this lifespan, which straddles three quite distinct sets of aesthetic assumptions, it's not surprising that we can find in Prud'hon's work traces of Rococo lightheartedness, of Neoclassical idealism, and even of a souped-up intensity that can be described without overstatement as Romanticism. In his most ambitious efforts, Prud'hon makes it clear that his conception of the figure is always a filtered version of the Neoclassical belief in the intrinsic superiority of antique prototypes, but his themes often echo the earlier eighteenth century's delight in images of dalliance and pleasure. He frequently disguises this mildly erotic "subtext" in what have been called "allegories of feeling"—musings on the distinction between love and friendship or between innocence and sexual awakening. Think of Greuze in his more ambiguous moments (not in his elaborately staged instructive narratives): nubile young girls weeping over "dead birds" or "broken pitchers." The most obvious difference between Prud'hon's visions of such delicate concepts as "reason speaks, pleasure entraps" or "virtue struggling with vice" and Greuze's titillating improvisations on lost innocence is that Prud'hon always presents his characters in the trappings of the classical past, including the nudity of classical sculpture, rather than the ribbons and fichus of eighteenth-century dress. (The main exceptions are his book illustrations—for example, his drawings for an edition of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which offered an opportunity to explore amorous themes in modern dress.)

But if Prud'hon's motifs can seem to reprise those of the ancien régime, many of his later works are imbued with a heightened sensibility and an exaggerated play of light and dark that seem closely related to what far younger painters than he—the generation associated with the Romantic movement—were striving for in their art. In fact, Prud'hon's works, despite his obvious commitment to the formal values of Neoclassicism, often appear to have much more in common with the swooning dramas of the Romantics than with the cool, uplifting efforts of his real contemporaries, such as, most notably, David. As I said, he doesn't lend himself readily to generalization.

Today, Prud'hon is hardly a household word—the show at the Metropolitan, seen last year in Paris, is the first retrospective of his work in the U.S.—but in his day, he was esteemed as one of the greatest painters in France. Even Stendhal, who was generally resistant to the charms of Neoclassicism, la-

1 "Pierre-Paul Prud'hon" opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, on March 10, 1998, and will remain on view through June 7. The exhibition was first seen at the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, Paris (September 23, 1997–January 5, 1998). A catalogue of the exhibition, by Sylvain Laveissière, has been published by the Metropolitan Museum and is distributed by Harry N. Abrams (344 pages, $75; $45 paper).

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mented Prud'hon's passing. Not that he was entirely forgotten. The Goncourt brothers, those chatty critic-aesthetes and connoisseurs of eighteenth-century art, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, praised him highly. A mid-twentieth-century edition of the *Petit Larousse Illustré*, which accords Prud'hon a picture—an honor denied to Boucher—describes him as "one of the most original and sought-after painters of his day, because of the graceful charm and airy poetry [sa grâce et sa poésie vaporeuse] of his work and his drawing." Prud'hon's talent was recognized early on, when he was first enrolled in the local drawing academy in his native Burgundy. He attracted the attention of helpful patrons, gained admission to the Royal Academy in Paris, and eventually won a Prix de Rome scholarship funded by the region of Burgundy, which allowed him to spend nearly four years in Italy, where he became a close friend of that paradigm of Neoclassical sculptors, Canova.

The fall of the French monarchy and the abolition of the Royal Academy ended Prud'hon's hopes of a traditional career, while an imprudent, early, and apparently unhappy marriage further complicated his life, but he nevertheless prospered. He may have frequently turned to portrait painting in order to support his unstable wife and five children, but the allegorical compositions—considered the most elevated form of history painting—that he submitted to the Salons were eagerly awaited and discussed, and during the reign of Napoleon he became an official court artist, regarded as the equal of David. As early as 1800, Prud'hon's name appeared on lists of the best or "most skilled" artists drawn up by various experts for the Minister of the Interior, Lucien Bonaparte. Praised for "brilliant compositions with the charm of Correggio and Parmigianino," he was also cited for his ability to paint ceilings, "a talent not given to all artists," and entrusted with important decorative schemes for various public buildings, including the Louvre. In Prud'hon's glory years, during Napoleon's reign, he seems to have made only one tactical error. He was Josephine's favorite painter—he drew and painted her portrait several times—but after Napoleon divorced her and remarried, certain works by Prud'hon failed to be exhibited at the Salon because they were closely associated with Josephine, and at least one important commissioned work was never realized at the scale at which it was originally conceived. On the other hand, Prud'hon's talents were valued sufficiently by Napoleon and the new empress, Marie-Louise, that he painted the portrait of their infant offspring, asleep, in the guise of Romulus, the founder of Rome. At age fifty, the painter was awarded the Legion of Honor by Napoleon. All in all, despite the political upheavals of the period in which he lived, Prud'hon could be said to have had a brilliant career, although it was considerably less brilliant, through no fault of his own, after the Bourbon Restoration.

The show traces Prud'hon's evolution from what may be his earliest effort, a shop sign painted for a hatter in Cluny, before the young painter left his native town (the catalogue entry, however, suggests that it may have been executed later), to the slippery, dramatically lit religious and allegorical paintings of his last years. The selection includes portraits, illustrations, decorative schemes, engravings, finished drawings, and studies from both nature and the antique—an exhaustive survey that perhaps tells us more about this elusive artist than is really necessary, but that serves to emphasize what may be the most notable thing about him: Prud'hon is hard to classify. At first glance, he seems like a typical Neoclassicist schooled at the Academy—a painter with an admirable mastery of subtle modeling and expressive chiaroscuro, capable of turning any subject into a geometrically and archaeologically correct composition that makes all the right allusions to specific antique statues and bas reliefs. It doesn't take long to realize, however, that Prud'hon's vision of antiquity, for all its marmoreal flesh, straight-bridged noses, and fillet-bound coiffeurs, is very different from that of his

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near-contemporary David or his great ancestor Poussin. If David and Poussin seem to have constructed their paintings according to the abstract mathematical relationships that form the organizing principles of Greco-Roman architecture and sculpture, Prud'hon appears to have based his work on other ideals. He seems to have aspired not to approximate the clear geometric relationships of antique prototypes in general, but to equal the refinement and delicacy of Hellenistic sculpture. (It's evident that Prud'hon and Canova had a great deal to say to one another.) In his own day, in fact, Prud'hon was praised for having recreated the sensual spirit of Greek art, an observation that was meant to set his work apart from that of David, with its aura of stern Roman virtue.

Whatever his relation to Greek sculpture, it's obvious that during his sojourn in Italy, Prud'hon was more impressed by the melting shadows of Correggio and the wistful elegance of Parmigianino than by the lapidary clarity of Raphael, and even though he may never have seen a painting by Leonardo's hand, what he knew of his work from engravings and copies inspired Prud'hon to cite the master of *sfumatura* as one of his greatest heroes. The "grâce" and the "poésie vaporeuse" alluded to in *Larousse* were Prud'hon's homage to the Italian artists he admired most, evidence of his thorough study of their work and his assimilation of the lessons they offered. Unfortunately, at least to late twentieth-century eyes, that *grâce* and *poésie*, *vaporeuse* or otherwise, are wedded to a syrupy sweetness that makes it difficult to understand the enthusiasm with which Prud'hon's elaborately conceived allegories were received when they were first exhibited. Part of the problem is what the exhibition catalogue perceptively refers to as "antipathy by association." It is impossible today to look at a picture like *Love Seduces Innocence, Pleasure Entraps, and Remorse Follows* (1809?, private collection) without thinking of what came after—"the academic and mawkish imitations [such works] inspired," as the catalogue entry puts it. Admittedly, *Love Seduces* is an extreme case. Even the tolerant, admiring catalogue writer acknowledges that despite the picture's "delightfully youthful nude figures, delicately rendered skin tones, and tender foliage," Prud'hon here "pushed sweetness to the limit." Decoding the allegory itself is not particularly challenging, once we know the title of the picture; in fact, the very literalness with which the conceit is enacted makes the painting seem even sillier to present-day viewers. Innocence, a bare-breasted but discreetly swathed young woman with modestly downcast eyes, is chucked under the chin by Love, an airbrushed winged youth, genitals neatly hidden by a convenient waft of drapery. A prancing, oversized Cupid (Pleasure) yanks on Innocence's tunic, while the trio is—you guessed it—trailed by Remorse, smiting her brow.

There was worse earlier in Prud'hon's career, in the cloying, sugary *Union of Love and Friendship* (1793, Minneapolis Institute of Arts), and worse to come later on, in *Psyche Carried Off by the Zephyrs* (1808, Musée du Louvre). The former presents two classical sculptures in living color, gives them expressions of staggering insipidity, and sets them side by side in a distinctly ambiguous embrace. (Friendship seems to be about to run her fingers up Love's naked thigh.) The latter painting is a monument to disguised prurience in which a pallid, fetchingly abandoned nude is manhandled—or, rather, boyhandled—by a gang of flying *putti* and one pre-adolescent; it's like child-molesting in reverse. The catalogue notes that "the picture's success lay in its harmonious combination of sensuality and idealism." Maybe. Bouguereau is right around the corner, although it is really unfair to hold Prud'hon responsible for that; he has enough to answer for on his own account.

Oddly enough, Prud'hon's "revolutionary allegories" are often interchangeable with his "allegories of feeling." The amazingly titled *Darkness Dissipates as Wisdom and Truth Descend to the Earth* (1798–99) is a

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major effort now in the collection of the Louvre and exhibited only in the Paris version of the retrospective. Represented in New York only by a preparatory drawing, *Darkness Dissipates* is not all that different in conception from the *Union of Love and Friendship*, except that both figures are standing, both are female, and one is dressed as Athena.

Of course, even if we overcome our modern-day resistance to Prud'hon's hyper-refined forms, licked surfaces, and over-sweetened conceptions, there are other obstacles to evaluating his worth. Many of his most ambitious large pictures have deteriorated badly, apparently because he often mixed questionable additives into his paint to retard its drying, so that he could continue to make adjustments. One of his last pictures, a large crucifixion, has suffered a great deal from darkening and "clumping" of the paint used for shading and glazing, so that highlighted flesh emerges slightly arbitrarily out of what appear to be the typical "soups and gravies" of the most conservative nineteenth-century painting. How much has been lost can be judged by comparison with a well-preserved work, the second of two versions of an allegory first commissioned by the prefect of the Seine around 1804 or 1805. The later incarnation of the painting, *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* (1815–1818?, Musée de l'Hotel Sandelin, Saint-Omer), is as clean, crisply modeled, and sculptural as an early Guido Reni. We must, however, overlook the curious suggestion implicit in the composition that Justice and Divine Vengeance have miraculously risen into the air in order to execute a tandem flying tackle on hapless Crime.

The exhibition's portraits and drawings are another story altogether, at least for modern-day taste. For the most part, Prud'hon's portraits are informal, affectionately observed, and freshly and economically painted. The sitters look intelligent, alert, and vigorous. The only exception is Talleyrand, whom Prud'hon painted, full length, on more than one occasion, both in official regalia and in ordinary clothes. No matter what the costume, however, or how admirably composed and harmonized the setting, the great statesman, survivor of countless changes of regime, looks stiff and rather artificial. His head sits oddly on his body, as though his garments had been arranged on a mannequin for the portrait painter's use, while the Great Man was busy elsewhere with affairs of state. A full-length seated portrait of Josephine de Beauharnais in her garden is more relaxed and casual, although perhaps more noteworthy for the ravishing painting of her gold-dotted gown and embroidered shawl than for its characterization of the sitter, who is turned into an idealized compendium of classical perfections. The working drawings related to the painting, however, are lively and full of charm. Even more vivid is a head of the painter Constance Mayer—Prud'hon's pupil, companion, and assistant—which has nothing to do with any classical ideal, but rather presents us with a very recognizable and personable young woman bursting with vitality.

Prud'hon's drawings are probably the most engaging and satisfying aspects of the show. He was a keen observer with a powerful sense of form and a delicate touch, and his academic drawings in black and white chalk are little masterpieces of subtle modeling and sculptural massing. But, once again, our perceptions of these drawings are colored by our awareness of both the great formal inheritance of the classical past and the debasement of that inheritance by the academic hacks of the nineteenth century —"antipathy by association." It is not always easy to accommodate the fusion of idealized poses and extremely specific bodies and of-the-moment heads in Prud'hon's life drawings, but in the best of them, the combination of an acute eye, a sensitive hand, and the homogenizing, light-evoking textures of delicately inflected chalk triumphs over our knowledge of how enfeebled this kind of drawing would become before the nineteenth century was out. What's particularly

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striking about these studies from life is their difference from the figures in Prud'hon's paintings. Even his most eloquently simplified, "Grecofied" life drawings make us doubly aware of how idealized, generalized, and streamlined both male and female bodies are on canvas. Would they be more expressive if they were less schematically rendered? It's impossible to say. You might end up with Ingres and his compelling, super-charged reinventions of the female form, or with Bouguereau and his fleshy soubrettes, apparently modeled in soap.

Whatever conclusion we reach about the merits of Prud'hon's work in relation to any of the artists whose lifetimes overlapped his own, the exhibition at the Metropolitan is instructive and valuable, if only because it reminds us of how complicated such relationships really are. I should admit, though, that what interested me the most was something only marginally connected to the thesis of the show. One of Prud'hon's decorative works in the exhibition, from the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, is an unfinished panel symbolizing abundance, with two women, one with a cornucopia. The rough state of the picture makes it appealing; since it's unfinished, there's no slippery shading, but, rather, clear drawing and elegant shapes. But what really engaged my attention is that *Abundance* once belonged to Henri Rouart, Degas's friend. (The connection was so close that Degas painted portraits of Rouart, his daughter, and one of his sons; another son was an executor of Degas's estate.) Degas must have known this picture. Frankly, I find that possibility more provocative than any of the carefully assembled works in the Prud'hon retrospective.

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An ongoing viability

by Mario Naves

The death knell for painting has been ringing long enough now to have been heard by generations of artists. To those who esteem high art (no scare quotes, please), it is a silly notion, more a feature of an art world geared toward novelty than a prognosis of the medium itself. This season alone has seen top-drawer exhibitions of painting, and artists continue resolutely to dab at their canvases. More than a few of them, however, have grown accustomed to the fact that their chosen medium is considered by many to be outmoded. (That it is so considered, more likely than not, by those who make art their business is one of the peculiar ironies of our day.) In the January issue of *Art in America*, the critic Lilly Wei wondered, "Is there still a place for this kind of art, or is it just something in which we used to believe?" Wei was writing about the work of a specific artist, but her doubt goes to the art of painting itself. What is disheartening is that Wei *likes* painting. That even its advocates become fidgety looking at—and, presumably, deriving pleasure from—painting, makes one realize how pervasive the "painting is dead" conceit really is.

Several recent exhibitions of painting attested to the medium's ongoing viability. Whether the Chuck Close retrospective at MOMA was one of them is debatable. In a radio interview, Close stated that he was "an old-fashioned artist." He is, in actuality, a new-fashioned one; he just happens to use paint and canvas, that's all. While not, technically speaking, a conceptual artist, Close came of age amid the conceptualist milieu of the 1960s, and it shows. The work is self-conscious, arty, and impersonal. What is never made clear during the course of the exhibition is why Close has spent thirty years painting heads. Unlike, say, Morandi with his bottles, boxes, and jars, Close's chosen motif never gives a sense of pictorial necessity. Why heads? Why not landscapes? Or, for that matter, soup cans? He isn't interested in traditional portraiture; the term "heads" is, after all, Close's own. In the catalogue, Kirk Varnedoe states that the head has a "base in primordial reflexes of recognition" and "the reliability of [an] involuntary perceptual gestalt." In other words, a gimmick. As with so much writing about contemporary art, highfalutin' nomenclature is used to forgive a deficit of artistic vision.

Close's paintings from the late 1960s and 1970s, with their unflinching depictions of facial hair and mottled skin, offer zilch to the eye in terms of painting. Given their airbrushed surfaces, describing the paintings as inert gives them too much oomph. The work perks up in the 1980s when Close begins to apply oil paint with a pointillist brushstroke aligned to a grid. His touch becomes increasingly painterly and gratifyingly so: squiggles, blobs, and what are described as "hot dogs" array Close's canvases. Standing near them, one sees only accumulations of pattern and marks. Mov-

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ing back, they come into focus as "heads" of Kiki Smith, Alex Katz, or some other art-world luminary, often the artist himself. This is painting as optical trickery. I might bemoan the waste of talent in the service of such an obvious device were it not that Close derives so much patent satisfaction from his work. While there is something to be said for his sense of a job well done, one prefers the tension even in, say, Francis Bacon's sensational misanthropy to these numb paintings.

Agnes Martin has been (as Varnedoe says of Close) painting "the same damned thing over and over." For Martin, the "damned thing" has been the stripe. Hers is an art of reduced—not to say Minimalist—means and the work's aesthetic terrain is not an expansive one. At first glance, her *oeuvre* would seem to be as narrow as Close's. Yet as her 1992 retrospective at the Whitney confirmed, Martin is an artist for whom formal repetition is surprisingly open-ended. While predicated on a systemic approach, the paintings avoid the mechanical. The stripe provides a means for continuity and renewal. Almost imperceptibly, the paintings create a pulse—rhythm is too bold a word—out of a sensibility so reticent that it risks evaporating altogether. It doesn't, though. There is an asceticism to the paintings, and their repetitions can be likened to visual mantras. What saves them from being boring (or vacant) is Martin's wan light—one observer called her "the last luminist"—and the understated trace of the artist's hand. Rarely have ruled lines been as sentient. Martin's talent is in locating the balance between not enough and just right.

Having said that, Martin's recent work at PaceWildenstein fell into the former category. The seven paintings on view were keyed to blue and white; two included a pale yellow. Although a couple of them divulged hints of layering, the paintings were cursory and unfinished. At her best, Martin's work creates an ambient, fugitive presence. Here the paintings were bleached out, as if they had been run through the washer one too many times. The thin, blotted stripes of blue were less atmospheric than vague. I suspect the artist thought as much, seeing how baldly her graphite line was used as a structural overlay. Indeed, the line was so emphatic that it became rude—rude, at least, for Martin. I favored the two paintings with yellow because they gave off the characteristic Martin glow. The rest, however, were chalky and flat. These pictures could have benefited from (to paraphrase Clement Greenberg) more time spent "cooking" in the studio. Certainly they would have benefited from more sympathetic framing. The strips of metal lining the paintings—with their harsh glints reflecting the gallery's lighting—ran counter to the imperturbable nature of Martin's art.

The Helen Miranda Wilson exhibition at Jason McCoy included twenty-three small paintings of clouds. Wilson's clouds recede in space, spread out in a flurry, float placidly, or cluster ominously at the top of the painting. In a few of the pieces we see evidence of terrestrial phenomena—a bird here, wind-blown leaves there—but, for the most part, the paintings are of the heavens themselves. (That we are left groundless, so to speak, reminds us of just how much we have invested in gravity.) Each image is based in observation of the most nuanced sort—anyone who dates her paintings according to the month has a stake in how time and season change the quality of light. Wilson is particularly good at capturing the improbable range of colors that occur in the sky. The greenish blues and internal light of the yellowish clouds in *Angels Running* (1997) are crystalline and virtuosic. Yet Wilson's virtuosity is predicated in propriety and the surfaces of her paintings aren't showy. They're magnetic. We're drawn into a spatial and chromatic experience that is undeniably beautiful.

Beautiful, one might add, and intense. The small size of the paintings works to dislocate our conception of scale. The actual immensity of the subject is in contrast with the blunt, boxlike formats of the pieces

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themselves. The paintings are as pressurized as a bottle of seltzer. There is something clinical about Wilson's manner, as if she were preserving clouds rather than painting them. The result can't be called Surrealist, but it does suggest the hallucinatory; the ragged whirl of clouds in *Hidden Moon* (1996), for instance, veers toward the psychedelic. Even though the works containing precisely rendered moons and stars become too literal, too precious, I can't get the exhibition out of my mind. Wilson's unearthly paintings made for one of the strongest shows of the season.

It was difficult to tell whether the George McNeil memorial exhibition, "The Expressive Body," at ACA Galleries constituted a retrospective or a hodgepodge. The work ranged from *Subway Scene* (1928), with its echoes of the Ashcan School, to the explosive figuration for which McNeil is best known and which he pursued until his death in 1995 (the artist was born in 1908). In between, McNeil studied with Hans Hofmann and was a member of the New York School. The exhibition skipped over his work of the 1950s and, given what I've seen of it, wisely so. Yet a few of his Ab-Ex canvases would have made this show more coherent. The *art brut* of Jean Dubuffet and the CoBrA group informed McNeil's vision, but it was the Abstract Expressionists —in particular, Jackson Pollock—that were pivotal to his art. It was from Pollock that McNeil inherited a linearity that transformed the canvas into a field of energy.

McNeil, however, is a better artist than Pollock ever was. Although his approach remained Ab-Ex in spirit and attack, McNeil's use of figuration activated his painting, transmogrifying Pollock's decorative swirls into something resembling life. McNeil took the impetus for his lumpish figures from the streets of New York City, the magic of myth, the grit of graffiti, and the burlesque of the cartoon. The work can be poignant, sweet, funny, or bawdy—sometimes, as in the sadly hilarious *Epernay II* (1960–91), all at once. McNeil's paintings have an emotional breadth that is as sweeping as the gestures he made in creating them. Yet as heated as the paintings are, they remain sturdy—they hold. With a palette that owes as much to Bonnard as to Hofmann, McNeil was a master colorist and, indeed, a master painter. It is a scandal that he doesn't have a more prominent place in the history of American art. Should an institution like MOMA or the Whitney ever see fit to mount a retrospective of his work, the situation might be rectified. The show would certainly provide a needed challenge to the status quo, as opposed to the Close exhibition which only serves to confirm it. Given the majesty of McNeil's accomplishment, such a retrospective is inevitable and I, for one, can't wait.

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Music

Alicia de Larrocha at Carnegie Hall

by Alexander Coleman

The rise of the virtuoso pianist during the Romantic period led to a serious decline in the public's appreciation of quiet musicianship. As a result, so much of the best music from the nineteenth century and earlier did not appeal to audiences, who had come to expect the cannonading and empty pyrotechnics of the worst (though often the most admired) demonstrative virtuosos. It was a problem that persisted well into this century in the playing of Ignace Paderewski and Josef Hofmann, and culminated in the highly charged performances of Vladimir Horowitz.

There is an anecdote from César Saerchinger's biography *Artur Schnabel* (1957) that illustrates the difference between mere virtuosity and genuine musicianship. After the eleven-year-old Schnabel began studying with the famed Viennese pedagogue Theodor Leschetizky in 1893, the teacher quickly took stock of the pupil and uttered a judgment that was also an admonition: "Artur," he intoned, "you will never be a pianist. *You* are a musician." To that end, Leschetizky forbade his student such works as the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* of Franz Liszt, and instead directed his attentions to piano works by Schubert, then lying in oblivion —"Schubert has written fifteen sonatas for piano which almost nobody knows. They are absolutely forgotten. No one ever plays them. *You* might like them." Of course, it was Schnabel's later recordings of Schubert's impromptus, *Moments Musicaux*, and many of the sonatas that brought these works back into the musical repertory.

The instructive distinction between a mere pianist and a musician was very much on my mind as I attended the piano recital by Alicia de Larrocha at Carnegie Hall in March.[1] As befitted this esteemed artist, now in her seventy-fifth year, this was very much a celebratory occasion. De Larrocha began her career as an exacting but undemonstrative musician at the age of five with a private recital in her native Barcelona, where her small audience was composed of some friends of her teacher Frank Marshall, including the composer Joaquín Turina. Her first public performance, in Madrid at age eleven, was of Mozart's "Coronation" concerto. A distinguished mainstay of the Mostly Mozart summer concerts for more than three decades, de Larrocha has produced a splendid legacy of recordings both of classic works from Bach onward and of—her specialty—the music of Spain.

Given de Larrocha's impressive musical accomplishments, I naturally went to the Carnegie Hall recital with high expectations. They were not, regrettably, entirely fulfilled. First of all, there was the matter of the program itself—four works of Chopin, at least two of them masterpieces of their

1 Alicia de Larrocha performed works by Frédéric Chopin, Joaquín Turina, and Isaac Albéniz at Carnegie Hall, New York, on March 27, 1998.

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kind, which altogether added up to some thirty-five minutes of music. Then, after what seemed to be an interminable intermission, there were dances by Joaquín Turina and two relatively short works of Isaac Albéniz that were played perfunctorily. Perhaps it is churlish to complain of being musically short-changed, but the lack of breadth and general weight in this recital left me with a sense of disappointment, especially given the catholic nature of de Larrocha's musical interests.

As for her performance, all of the notes were of course securely in place, and the tonal sheen from the piano was a constant joy to hear, but the dynamics were so carefully modulated that nary a true forte was heard throughout the evening, not to mention anything resembling a fortissimo. On the plus side, it can be said that this delicate approach to the keyboard commanded the undivided attention of the listener: it drew you in. Still, there were moments—in the Chopin *Barcarolle* and the *Polonaise-fantasie* in particular—when more projection might have given the music a broader dynamic palette. I cannot recall a more uninflected, even underplayed, performance of the *Barcarolle*. Perhaps we have been corrupted by the excessive rubato and constant tempo variation of such pianists as Arthur Rubinstein and Ivan Moravec, two players for whom a nanosecond's delay in the delivery of a note or a chord and a constantly shifting pulse make all the difference in the final effect. Rather than evoking the Venetian gondola songs and the generally sumptuous Latin atmosphere intended by the composer, Miss de Larrocha's *Barcarolle* was a brisk, get-on-with-it traversal of the music: bracing enough on its own terms, but without much transport or charm.

Again, this was a recital by a *musician*, but one who now has taken self-effacement and sonic modesty too far. De Larrocha's attitude toward the music remained what it always has been—intensely devotional and chaste. Possibly (and with this I end my quibbles) the recital would have been more fortunately realized in a smaller, more intimate setting. In any event, the reception by the audience was notably fervent.

Perhaps I should now declare an interest. As a former professor of Spanish literature, I was always aware that among the constants of Spanish intellectual and cultural life in the twentieth century were not only the relation of contemporary artistic practice to its splendid historical legacy going back to the Spanish Golden Age and before, but also the question of how the culture of Spain relates to the rest of Europe. In political terms, the European Union may have given the answer, but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and certainly after the catastrophe of the Spanish-American War of 1898, these were, to use a famous Spanish phrase, *cuestiones palpitantes*. As in Russia, there were advocates of a cultural identity for the country distinct from European values, while others saw the future only in the relation of Spain to the rest of Europe and of course to Spanish America.

In Barcelona and throughout Catalonia in general, the question becomes all the more complex, given Catalonia's distinct language, proximity to France, boisterous political orientations (severely repressed by Franco), and above all its cultural *renaxensa* in painting, architecture, and music well under way by the turn of the century. Madrid may have been the seat of the court and the central government, but Barcelona was more vibrant and forward-looking in all senses. In music, it was here that Pau (Pablo) Casals (1876–1973) played a decisive role in the establishment of basic standards for the performance of the symphonic repertory in Spain. Casals's Orquesta Pau Casals gave its first concerts in 1920, three years before the birth of Alicia de Larrocha, and continued for seventeen years in Barcelona and other cities in Spain until the onset of the Spanish Civil War and Casals's permanent exile abroad. The orchestra was initially funded almost entirely by concert fees earned abroad by the cellist himself, and it was he who conducted a considerable number of the concerts.

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No orchestra in Spain could equal it: they made fine recordings (some Beethoven symphonies, the Brahms *Double* Concerto with the violinist Jacques Thibaud) and were directed by some sixty guest conductors over the seventeen-year life of the orchestra—including such distinguished figures as Otto Klemperer, Serge Koussevitsky, Hermann Scherchen, Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky, and Anton Webern. A piquant aspect of Casals's fervent republicanism was the workers' concerts given by the orchestra, where the working public was admitted *only* if their income fell well below a modest top figure. How this was administered is anyone's guess, but the plain, drab clothing of the public at the first concert elated Casals. The point is that this was the hallowed musical standard that reigned in Barcelona until 1937—the performances were nonvirtuosic, with a studied lack of flamboyance. Simplicity and integrity in the delivery of the music were essential. These were the musical values espoused by Casals within Spain and later at the Prades and Perpignan Festivals after the Second World War, the Marlboro Festival in Vermont, and the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico. (For Casals's complete performance history, see H. L. Kirk's *Pablo Casals: A Biography* from 1974.) It seems clear that Casals's whole approach to music and performance had an immense impact on the developing years of Alicia de Larrocha.

A key problem confronting a budding instrumentalist born in Spain is the conflict between the demands of a career in Spain as a "Spanish" artist and those entailed by a career abroad. Casals himself, while a solid advocate of the music of Manuel de Falla, Enrique Granados, and other Spanish composers, centered his artistic achievement on major canonic European composers from Bach through Dvořák, Saint-Saëns, Elgar, and Bloch. In this sense, he was an internationally renowned artist who happened to hail from Vendrell, Catalonia.

Born forty-seven years after Casals, Alicia de Larrocha has made an equally determined effort to go beyond national boundaries. Though her mother and her aunt were students of the grand virtuoso composer Granados, it is a measure of de Larrocha's determinedly classical formation as a fledgling artist that she played no Spanish music at all (admittedly at the insistence of her teacher) until she was eighteen years old, that is, around 1941. The basic fare during these formative years was Bach, Scarlatti, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, and Debussy. The formation remained a constant with her—as one critic recently observed, "She prefers not to be known as a 'Spanish pianist,' but as a pianist who happens to be Spanish." This classicism has served her well over the years as she began to approach Spanish music, above all that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As she sternly noted to the critic Raymond Ericson in 1966, "Spanish music is very very very hard. . . . if you cannot play Bach and Mozart well, you cannot play Spanish music well."

As for her interpretive models, she mentions two quite different pianists—the German pianist Wilhelm Kempff (1895–1991), an artist of singing tone and very measured tempi; and her friend and mentor Arthur Rubinstein (1887–1982), whose increasing affection for Spanish music after his first tour of Spain in 1916 led him to be known, among much else, as a proponent of Spanish piano music. Indeed, I can vouch for the fact that it was a rare Rubinstein concert that did not end (after many encores) with a blazing rendition of Falla's *Ritual Fire Dance*.

But the truth is that Rubinstein looked upon all of Spanish music as mere exotica. As he ruefully admitted to the critic Samuel Chotzinoff many years later,

> I must confess that, while I was happy to give pleasure with Spanish music, my heart really belonged more to the classics, old and new—to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, to the impressionists, to Debussy and Ravel and our Polish Szymanowski. I played Spanish music in such a way that my

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> audiences found it hard to resist me. And that, my dear fellow, was a tragedy for me. . . . I gave people what they wanted in the way they wanted and I had a big success, but there was a void in my heart. Musically speaking, I was leading a double life.

What was a double life for the older pianist became a coalesced whole in the career of Alicia de Larrocha—her recorded performances of Albéniz, Falla, Granados, Turina, and Federic Mompou are treasured for their measured sobriety and their rhythmic sprightliness. But, at the same time, keep in mind that she has recorded all five Beethoven piano concerti, along with a rich sampling of Chopin, Schumann, Haydn, Mozart, Grieg, and Mendelssohn.

I bring up these matters only to suggest that, at this stage of her career, where her playing is ruminative and intimate, a rich program representing the true breadth of her repertory would have made for a more satisfying seventy-fifth-anniversary concert —much more Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert, Schumann, Franck, or Fauré.

Concert notes

Dichterliebe and other songs, by Robert Schumann, sung by Ian Bostridge at Hertz Hall, Berkeley, California.

Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, and Hugo Wolf together form German art song's Holy Trinity. To the degree that the general population knows anything about the intimate art of lieder singing, it is almost exclusively through the works of these three composers. And within these composers's substantial *oeuvres*, three song cycles have achieved conspicuous popularity. They are, of course, *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Die Winterreise* by Schubert and Schumann's *Dichterliebe*. Their fame rests largely on the broad canvases the composers employed and also on the exceptional craft that refines them. But there may be another reason modern audiences have so embraced these cycles: they possess, for lack of a better term, a "cinematic" quality, i.e., a strong sense of place and mood that's vividly paired with bold narration.

On Sunday, March 1, at a much anticipated recital on the campus of the University of California, the English tenor Ian Bostridge offered an account of *Dichterliebe* ("A Poet's Love") that was at once unforced and probing. His all-Schumann program, which also consisted of the *Liederkreis* ("Song Cycle"), op. 24, and assorted other songs, gave American audiences their first opportunity to hear this talented singer. (His New York debut took place two weeks later, on Sunday, March 15, at the Frick Collection.) In delivering a particularly compelling *Dichterliebe*, Bostridge lived up to his billing and then some, but in the best show-biz tradition, the thirty-two-year-old tenor kept his audience waiting for the more famous work, delivering the greater part of his program first. Such savvy was indicative of this naturally gifted artist's instincts.

Bostridge, who was a student of history and philosophy at Oxford and Cambridge before embarking on a musical career, possesses a pale, willowy handsomeness, and his looks added a visual dimension to the declamations of Schumann's various poet-narrators. (His charcoal-gray suit, which made him look every inch the undertaker, only lent further verisimilitude to the experience.) On this program, each of the texts was by Heinrich Heine, most of them embittered love ballads. All were well served by Bostridge's light but firm tenor voice and the pleasant reedy quality that permeates his timbre. There is no hint of frailty in his vocalism, yet a tenderness suffuses his readings. It was therefore something of a risk to reprogram the recital to begin with "Belsazar," op. 57, a muscular, extended meditation on that passage from the Book of Daniel in which a haughty Babylonian king is slain. The phrase "the writing on the wall" originates with this story, and listeners could not help but keep those words in mind when hearing Bostridge, for from the

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song's opening, it was clear that here was an especially promising young artist. "Belsazar" is the only Schumann song assigned an individual opus number, and Bostridge made a persuasive case for the work's specialness, never more so than when he portentously delivered the word *schwand* ("gone").

The four songs that followed were more in keeping with the afternoon's theme of love, albeit mostly pained. Bostridge sang with ease and ardency, misstepping only in the happiest of these items, "Mein Wagen rollet langsam" ("Slowly My Carriage Rolls"), op. 142, no. 4, in which he sounded overcharacterized and adopted some distracting mannerisms. But it was here, in the song's touching postlude, that one realized what an exceptional accompanist the singer had in Julius Drake, whose pianism was deeply felt and colorful all through the recital. The nine songs of the *Liederkreis* found both singer and pianist fully engaged in Schumann's Romantic spirit. Bostridge sustained notes without strain but with appropriate tension, beautifully balancing energy and repose. He proved especially fine in "Ich wandelte unter den Bäumen" ("Amid the Trees I Wandered"), transforming into the lovestruck protagonist while floating lambent high notes. And in "Warte, warte, wilder Schiffsmann" ("Wait, Wait, Wild Sailor"), the tenor perfectly captured the rantings of a crazed lover. Comparisons to Peter Pears, perhaps the last English tenor to arouse such interest, may be unfair, but in the pastoral "Berg' und Burgen schaun herunter" ("Mountains, Castles Gaze Down"), Bostridge's airy reading brought the renowned singer to mind.

Dichterliebe, which Bostridge sang at a generally relaxed pace, filled the recital's second half. Immediately, listeners were transported to a dreamy sound world in which well-formed high notes were launched gloriously. In some ways, *Dichterliebe* is the bitterest of song cycles, for its corrosive laments, in which irony and sarcasm reign, trump even *Die Winterreise*, where a mood of weariness, even resignation, pervades. Not surprisingly, there was little to quibble with in this account, but Bostridge did mistake speed for ebullience in "Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne" ("Rose, Lily, Dove, Sun"), which he made sound like a patter song. And in "Ich grolle nicht" ("I Bear No Grudge") a misplaced earnestness blunted the song's edge. But the tenor was deeply moving in "Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen" ("When I Hear the Song") and just about everywhere else, too. For his part, Drake proved as dynamic a performer as Bostridge and deservedly shared the limelight. His attention to the subtlest dynamic shifts was fastidious, though not slavish, and even though the piano lid was up, he never muted his support for the singer's sake alone. Rather, he played as though he were the center of attention, and his confidence only enhanced the performance. In the work's famous piano postlude, Drake managed something Schumann must have hoped for, an ineffable quality realized by music alone.

What Bostridge achieved was a stunning debut, one that will linger long in the memory of those lucky enough to have been in attendance. It makes no sense to guess at Bostridge's future, as pitfalls loom large for young singers today. But based on the available evidence, Bostridge may well be what many music lovers have longed for: a singer who combines the talents, taste, and discretion of the best English choristers with the magnetism and character of a first-rate soloist.

—*David Mermelstein*

Bryn Terfel,
at Symphony Center, Chicago.

Of this century's most celebrated vocal artists, the singers who have best caught the imagination of the public, it seems, are those who have been able to bridge the world of popular song and the operatic stage with the greatest ease. Bringing the poise and discipline of the concert hall to lighter music and, conversely, infusing reci-

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tals with the freshness and vitality of the popular song seems to give us the best of both worlds. Whether it's Caruso singing Neapolitan songs or McCormack's rendering of Irish ballads, the best singers have an ability to blend the immediacy and communicative thrust of native popular musical traditions with the rigorous vocal and technical demands of operatic performance. Wagner noted that the farther music gets from the dance, the more it tends to ossify, and, perhaps, the same could be said of song the further it gets from traditional folk-flavored musical expression.

Such thoughts come to mind, reflecting upon the celebrated Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel and his concert in Chicago this past winter. Since winning the 1989 Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, the burly six-foot-four singer has become a regular presence in the world's leading opera houses and concert halls. Declining audiences have led to many Cassandras predicting the end of the vocal recital, but, as Bryn Terfel and pianist Malcom Martineau demonstrated in the remarkable performance heard at Symphony Center on February 1, the much maligned art form is alive and robustly kicking. Indeed, the engaging singer's reinvigoration of what is often decried as a musty and archaic convention transcended the staid setting and played to his considerable strengths—a unique combination of cockiness, natural ease in performing, and the ability to wield his weighty vocal instrument with strikingly agile and sensitive singing. Any performer who can convincingly interpret Schubert lieder and Flanders and Swann ditties on the same program gets my vote.

The first half of the demanding recital concentrated on the twin pillars of the German lieder tradition with excerpts from a Schumann cycle and a selection of Schubert songs. Written in 1840, Robert Schumann's extraordinarily fecund "year of song," the first six selections from that composer's *Liederkreis*, op. 39, received strikingly dramatized readings, with Terfel plumbing a wide range of expression in Schumann's hyper-Romantic settings of von Eichendorff's poetry. While his vehemence and fury in the fiery settings was daunting, most distinctive was Terfel's softer touch in songs like "In der Fremde" and "Mondnacht," with sensitively shaded *mezzo voce* singing.

In a generous—perhaps too generous—selection of Schubert lieder, Terfel showed his interpretive versatility in eight varied settings. Here again, while the ballast and power of Terfel's voice in songs like his vividly characterized "Gruppe aus dem Tartarus" are striking, most memorable are the more inward settings. Terfel's deeply felt "Litanei auf das Fest Aller Seelen" displayed the fluidity of his legato, amazing for such a large instrument, and his gentle singing in the final bars floated like gossamer. Some may find Terfel prone to occasional over-interpretation—as in his mock-heroic "Die Forelle," which was slightly overdone, with a final bowed head in tribute to the deceased fish. Yet the variety of vocal nuance that Terfel employed negated criticism, whether in his ardent lover in "Das Fischermädchen"; his vehement and raging heartbreak in "Rastlose Liebe"; or his melting tenderness in "Du bist die Ruh'," which swelled to a hint of desperation in the final stanza. Perhaps the characterization of the three voices in "Der Erlkönig" weren't quite as distinctly drawn as by Fischer-Dieskau—with a somewhat unfocused timbre for the evil title sprite—yet it was still a full-blooded reading.

The mostly lighter second half played even more to Terfel's great strengths. In two Welsh songs by Idris Lewis, the thirty-two-year-old Terfel converted the formal concert hall to a Pantglas pub, his spirited rendition of "Can yr Arad Gioch" ("The Song of the Plow") eliciting such an enthusiastic ovation that the surprised singer responded, "You're all Welsh, are you?" Lewis's "Bugail Aberdyfi" ("Shepherd of Aberdovey") provided the necessary contrast, Terfel conveying this deeply felt setting of a deserted lover with a dignified emotion and an aching sense of loss. The song-cycle *Let Us Garlands Bring* by the greatly underrated

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English composer Gerald Finzi was even more movingly rendered. In these Shakespeare settings on the temporal nature of existence, Terfel evoked the gently varied melancholy with poise and sensitivity, the pianist Martineau echoing Terfel's every nuance with preternatural sympathy.

"My time to relax," is how Terfel introduced the lighter selections that made up the recital's final portion, which was announced from the stage. Two classics from musical theater were done with unerring style and lyrical grace. In the coda to Lerner and Loewe's "How to Handle A Woman," Terfel's velvety repeated "love her" brought a surprising liederlike depth to this *Camelot* song made famous by another feted Welshman, Richard Burton. Terfel's playful way with Rodgers's "It Might as Well Be Spring" was even more winning, complete with moonwalk at the piano break and his witty following of the line "but I feel so gay" with a mock admonitory caution at "in a melancholy way."

A haunting, deeply interior rendering of George Butterworth's bleak "Is My Team Plowing?" was contrasted with, of all things, a crazed rendition of Flanders and Swann's classic anti-ode to homebuilders, "The Gas Man Cometh." Interpolations by the singer playing on his name, "Terfel," and "trifle" were delivered with all the bluster and flawless comic delivery of Basil Fawlty.

Terfel gave as generously as he could with four varied, if not quite linear, encores, including another Flanders and Swann epic, "The Hippopotamus Song," in which Terfel led the packed hall in the chorus of "Mud, Mud, Glorious Mud." While not a night for musical purists, the evening offered a performance of dizzying range by one of the most engaging and ebullient musical personalities of our time.

—*Lawrence A. Johnson*

Editor's note: We wish to call attention to the recent publication of *The Uses of Adversity*, by Ronald Wallace (University of Pittsburgh Press, $25; 12.95 paper), and *A Culture of Its Own: Taking Latin America Seriously*, by Mark Falcoff (Transaction, $32.95), portions of which first appeared in *The New Criterion*.

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The media

Sorry about that

by James Bowman

Among the many pleas for "civility" with which the media pullulates, one ought occasionally to insert a small caveat by way of mentioning the important purpose served by civility's supposed opposite, namely "partisanship." In fact it is perfectly possible to be a civil partisan. Indeed, it is partisanship which created the whole notion of civility, since partisanship without it is war. Not "war" in the way that James Carville or some of the more ink-thirsty of our culture warriors use it, but real war. War that kills people. Yet if civility is necessary, as the expression seems to suggest, for the existence of civil society, so is partisanship, since it serves the vital social and intellectual function of exposing humbug. And it is because the American media, drunk with the conceit of its own high calling, feels constrained to hide its partisanship that humbug in our national life is so seldom exposed to cleansing laughter and stays around to poison the system.

So during this last month, one could not but regret the absence of those gales of partisan laughter which should have greeted what some have called President Clinton's "contrition tour" of Africa, during which he apologized (or sort of apologized: Clinton's characteristic lawyerly hedging always made it somewhat doubtful) for (1) American slavery, (2) American complicity in the evils of the former Apartheid regime in South Africa, (3) American support for brutal African dictators who took a pro-Western position during the Cold War, and (4) American neglect during 1994 when Rwandan Hutus massacred some half a million of their Tutsi fellow countrymen. Presumably, it was thought to be not quite decent, not quite nice, for anyone not in the ghetto of the right-wing press to point out the obvious humbug behind each and every one of these apologies.

The apology vogue began last summer, with a movement, sponsored by Representative Tony Hall, a white Democrat from Ohio, and twelve other members of Congress of both parties, to pass a resolution of the House of Representatives "that the Congress apologizes to African-Americans whose ancestors suffered as slaves under the Constitution and laws of the United States until 1865." At the time, even many of those who earn their livings in the race-relations industry were skeptical. Jesse Jackson said: "It is like you drive over somebody with a car, leave the body mangled, then you decide to come back later to apologize with no commitment to help them get on their feet. . . . There is something empty in that. It is just more race entertainment." Hugh Price of the National Urban League said that the apology would not "address the bottom line issues of inequality, which are rooted in the gaps in education and economic opportunity."

Both of these gentlemen having built careers on the kind of white guilt that expresses itself in more substantive forms,

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they are in uniquely advantageous positions to see the hollowness of an apology that does not come with any cash attached. Hall, who has made his reputation in the House as an advocate for the hungry and who fasted for three days in protest when the House Subcommittee on Hunger was shut down, made his big mistake when he denied that his bill had anything to do with the movement led by Representative John Conyers of Michigan to make the government pay monetary reparations to the descendants of slaves. "It is a step toward healing," said Hall. "That's all it is, a simple apology." At that time Clinton backed away from it, and the proposal faded away. "The President has really, in a way, put that issue aside and said that's not going to be the focus of his race initiative," said Mike McCurry last summer; "nor is it the place he believes we should really start the kind of discussion he is looking for, one that's aimed at bringing Americans together."

Since then, however, the fashion of political apology seems to have taken hold internationally—perhaps because the natural and healthy skepticism of the press was permanently weakened everywhere by the Diana phenomenon. The pope kicked things off with an apology, when he was in France last summer, for the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572. Later in the autumn, he apologized to Jews for Christian anti-Semitism, and apologies for the Spanish Inquisition and for General Franco are also said to be under consideration. In March the Church carefully apologized for a history of "anti-Judaism" and for not doing more to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. In November, on the eightieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Boris Yeltsin issued a carefully worded apology, worthy of Clinton himself, for the "fateful, historic mistake" of the Revolution—even though, he said, it led to many achievements under Communism.

More recently, the pace of apology seems to have picked up. Already this year, Canada has apologized to its indigenous peoples for forcing them into state-run schools where many were abused physically or sexually, France has apologized for the Dreyfus affair on the hundredth anniversary of Zola's *J'accuse*, and Tony Blair of Britain, having already apologized for British neglect of the victims of the Irish potato famine of the 1840s, apologized for the "Bloody Sunday" massacre in Northern Ireland. Only the Canadian apology seems to have come with any money attached—a $245 million "healing fund," which I, as someone who was also forced into state-run schools where I was beaten with a wooden chalkboard compass, look forward to seeing replicated elsewhere.

The attentive observer cannot avoid noticing that what all these apologies have in common is that they were not made by anybody who could very plausibly be said to bear any of the guilt by which they were presumably inspired. On the contrary, for politicians to apologize for the actions of their predecessors is subtly to confirm their own superior fitness for office. Or not so subtly in the case of Rudolph Giuliani, the mayor of New York, whose apology for the city's failure to act more effectively during the Crown Heights riots (which accompanied a million dollar settlement of damage claims) was a more or less explicit act of aggression against the former mayor, David Dinkins, the man who was responsible for the city's police force at the time. For good measure, Giuliani apologized to Brooklyn Dodgers fans on behalf of the late Mayor Robert Wagner for the loss of their team to Los Angeles.

Well, such a costless exercise which simultaneously celebrates one's own fine feelings and denigrates the abilities of the less enlightened, less sensitive holders of one's office was bound to appeal to Bill Clinton, particularly at a time when even the Democratic press was disposed to question his moral fitness for office. First, in what his aides said was a spontaneous and impromptu reaction to a speech by Yoweri Museveni, the president of Uganda, Clinton said:

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> It is as well not to dwell too much on the past, but I think it is worth pointing out that the United States has not always done the right thing by Africa. In our own time, during the Cold War, when we were so concerned about being in competition with the Soviet Union, very often we dealt with countries in Africa and in other parts of the world based more on how they stood in the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union than how they stood in the struggle for their own people's aspirations to live up to the fullest of their God-given abilities. And, of course, going back to the time before we were even a nation, European Americans received the fruits of the slave trade. And we were wrong in that, as well.

It is true but somewhat beside the point to reply that the Cold War was a much more serious business than mere "competition" with the Soviet Union, and that, among the few "aspirations" Americans of the period could have shared with the less happy people of Mr. Museveni's country, the aspiration to remain alive and unenslaved by the likes of Leonid Brezhnev or Idi Amin Dada is deserving of prominent mention.

The more pertinent reply is that it is a very easy and morally shabby expedient, once our ends have been attained, to apologize for the means. It is a form of sentimentalism, perhaps inspired on the spur of the moment by the dancing and singing children, "the drums, the rattles and the bright, high voices" by which the Clintons were said to have been surrounded at the time. Once the President noticed the children it was all over, for, in his expansiveness (he also joined, briefly, in their dance), he went on to say: "But perhaps the worst sin America ever committed about Africa was the sin of neglect and ignorance. We have never been as involved with you, in working together for our mutual benefit, for your children and for ours, as we should have been." This is doubtless true, though in the days when Westerners were not ignorant or neglectful of Africa, their "working together for our mutual benefit" was called imperialism, and it is no doubt only through an oversight that Clinton failed to apologize for that, too.

This is not just an incidental point, as Clinton himself showed when he went on to apologize, the next day, for the Rwandan massacres. "All over the world, there were people like me sitting in offices day after day after day, who did not fully appreciate the depth and the speed with which you were being engulfed by this unimaginable terror." How typical of the man that, when he came to the one apology for something he himself had done, he managed to shift the blame onto "people like me," a category which might not even include "me"! As Mark Steyn observed in the London *Sunday Telegraph*:

> When General Romeo Dallaire, the Canadian commander of the UN peacekeepers, asked for authorisation to stop the massacres, the Americans blocked him and had them pulled out. The UN has to learn, said Mr. Clinton, "when to say no." There weren't people like him all over the world sitting in offices. There was only him, sitting in his office, the Pain-Feeler-In-Chief kissing off half-a-million nobodies: Toot-Toot, Tutsies, Goo'bye! It's a reasonable position to feel America has no interest in preventing one bunch of Africans hacking up another bunch of Africans, but it requires especial reserves of cynicism and contempt to seek approval for feeling bad about it four years later.

But Clinton's end was achieved insofar as feeling bad about things that seem to most people worth feeling bad about is his administration's major policy ambition—and accomplishment. And that was enough, too, for Miss Gloriosa Uwimpuhwe of Rwanda, who was quoted in *The New York Times* as saying that the president "behaved as a real, real human being who felt what people were saying, even though he did not see it himself. . . . He said that he not only is sorry, but he's looking forward to taking positive options for the future."

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There are doubtless many Gloriosas among the Volvo-driving soccer-moms back home, willing to live their political lives in the hope of "positive options for the future," but we might have expected something a little more tough-minded from the American press corps. If ever humbug cried out to be hooted off the stage, this is it; yet the media at large seem to have been at least as ready as Miss Uwimpuhwe to give Mr. Clinton credit for his sympathetic feelings. Ronald Steel in *The New Republic*, for example, wrote that

> if any people is owed an official apology, it is the Vietnamese, for the years of untold suffering, carnage, and violence that the American government inflicted upon them. But there is no domestic constituency to applaud such a confession. Alongside the silence about Vietnam, the Vatican's efforts to come to grips with its own anti-Judaism and even Clinton's apologies to Africans seem noble and courageous.

This is remarkable even among the pro-Clinton media for its sycophancy: you acknowledge that his apology was disingenuous and designed to pander to a domestic constituency and yet, because it was easier to offer than another apology he didn't make, you contrive to call it courageous! Huh?

Courage requires sacrifice, and so does serious politics. It is mere sentimentalism which pretends that there are no costs incurred by our fine feelings. As Yael S. Aronoff wrote in *The Washington Post*, "once genocide is underway, it is unlikely that anything but military force will end the horror. The main question the president needs to address is, 'Do you support military action by U.N. forces, and by U.S. forces when the United Nations is not acting quickly enough to stop genocide already underway?'" Thus merely to state the obvious about policy in the matter is to point up the hollowness of Clinton's apology. Of course he was not going to say anything controversial about committing American troops (and if he did that would be very far from the same thing, with him, as committing them). The whole point of the "apology" was to express creditable feelings without the need for doing anything about them. And it was the same with the apology for slavery. Repentence without restitution and a "firm purpose of amendment" is, as the church used to recognize, worthless.

But Clinton gets away with it because the press culture is as sentimental as his own—partly because it is so monolithic. The belief that only one set of policy alternatives is "caring," or even decent, entails the belief that "caring" is an unproblematic business, involving none of the hard choices or sacrifices that this administration has become so skillful at eliding. It is only the most reflexive kind of liberalism which is ready to believe that saying you care about something, whether it is African genocide or "education and the environment," is the same thing as caring about it. And when it comes to genocide and the options are either doing nothing or engaging in a costly, imperialist-style military intervention, it is reflexive anti-imperialism as well as the fear of political and military disaster which will make attractive, or at least acceptable, the idea of doing nothing and then apologizing for it later.

Back in the days when Representative Hall was first bruiting about his idea for an apology for slavery, Ira Berlin, professor of history at the University of Maryland, wrote in *The Washington Post* in general support for the idea (so long as people knew what they were apologizing for) that "slavery was about domination and, of necessity, it rested on coercion." But this is true of all social orders. So too, he says, "slavery was also about resistance." These are observations which fall into the "what's your point?" category. The coercion can be condemned in retrospect because it took a form which is no longer socially acceptable; the resistance looks heroic in retrospect because the resisters were legally and morally if not yet al-

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together practically successful in claiming their place as full citizens. Berlin's point is really to sell us on a bit of muddled crypto-Marxism about the ultimate identity of racial and class interests. But having raised the issue of coercion, he should have pursued it a little further.

What, for instance, about America's indigenous peoples, who lost their battle for social integration? By the now-familiar process of sentimental identification, they have become objects of admiration, but only since their numbers became so small and pathetic that they could never again hope to constitute anything but the most marginal of social sub-groups. Surely "we" should apologize to the Indians first? But wait a minute. Don't we need to go even further back? Those of us who are of Anglo-Saxon stock need to apologize to the Welsh first. And, of course to the Irish and the Scots. Only these virtuous Celts (of which I am proud to count myself one) don't have to apologize, since whomever it was that they expropriated some centuries before the Romans came and expropriated them are forever lost to the historical record.

Apologies are part of our national religion of sentiment, and they reinforce in us that tendency fostered by all sentimentalism, namely the persuasion that the world is "nicer" than it really is. A ruling class is always subject to sentimentalism, since it helps it to close its eyes to the brutality on which its domination ultimately rests. The slave owners were sentimental about their "darkies" whom they fondly imagined really liked being slaves; we are similarly sentimental about the historical sufferings of all kinds of "minorities" in a way that our grandfathers never used to be precisely because the time when those minorities could constitute any threat to our wealth and power and privilege is long past. Having bought long-term security, we grow almost immediately sentimental about those at whose expense we bought it—like those victims of the African dictators to which Clinton apologized—just so long as it doesn't cost us anything.

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Fiction chronicle

Creating a führer

by Brooke Allen

Gore Vidal has claimed to be the only American writer of his generation to evince any interest in our country's (or any other country's) history. It is typical of Vidal to go for the hyperbole, blithely ignoring the work of several well-known contemporaries; still, it must be admitted that he has a point. "Americans in general are not concerned with anything that happened before yesterday," he has said, and American writers—certainly as compared to European ones—seem remarkably uninterested in the past.

Vidal, on the other hand, has made history his specialty, and over a period of about a quarter-century he created an idiosyncratic account of American history in his so-called American chronicle, a series of six novels that cover our past from the early nineteenth century to the McCarthy period: *Washington, D.C.* (1967), *Burr* (1973), *1876* (1976), *Lincoln* (1984), *Empire* (1987), and *Hollywood* (1990).

Vidal's usual stance is that of the gleeful revisionist, energetically demolishing the patriotic pieties (and surely many deserve demolishing) that we were taught in school—the heroic vision of American history. Still, in the process of writing his chronicle he developed his own *idées fixes* on which he now harps as relentlessly as any schoolmarm.

His usual routine is to equate the United States with Rome, the promising, idealistic republic transformed into a bloated empire. Just when this transformation actually occurred in America is a question Vidal seems unable to settle. In *Burr*, he suggested that the Republic was doomed from the beginning; in *Lincoln*, *1876*, and *Empire* the crucial moment would seem to be Reconstruction. In a recent essay ("Geopolitical Thoughts: Requiem for the American Empire," *The Nation*, January 11, 1986), he stated that the empire began in earnest in 1914, when New York replaced London as the world financial capital. It is possible that he settled upon this date in order to bolster his simultaneous contention that the American Empire is now at an end, having ceded economic primacy to Japan. (The current state of the financial market in the Far East would seem to have proved the report of the empire's death to be exaggerated, or at any rate a little premature.)

The "alternate world" genre, part science fiction and part historical fiction, is an appealing one; at its best it can prove riveting. What if the Axis powers had won World War II, as in Philip K. Dick's *Man in the High Castle*? What if the Reformation had never taken place, as in Kingsley Amis's *The Alteration*? The pleasure of such speculation, working out the endless play of cause and effect, is irresistible. *The Smithsonian Institution*, Vidal's newest novel, is his contribution to the genre, a respectable if frequently silly one.[1]

1 *The Smithsonian Institution*, by Gore Vidal; Random House, 265 pages, $23.

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It is 1939, and war clouds, as the cliché has it, are gathering over Europe. T. (the appellation is explained later) is a thirteen-year-old baseball and physics prodigy, an orphan whose parents were killed aboard the Hindenburg. He lives on K Street, Washington, with his aunts and attends St. Albans School, where Vidal himself was once a student. On Good Friday, T. receives a mysterious summons to appear at the Smithsonian after hours: the door, he is assured, will be left open.

Upon entering the museum he discovers that the place has a life of its own when the tourists are gone: all the wax figures come to life and mix and mingle in the most promiscuous fashion. T. is greeted at the door by Mrs. Benjamin Harrison—"she had a pretty smile thanks to a number of regular black teeth and a large bust"—who has left her platform at the exhibit of first ladies' inaugural gowns to act as T.'s guide. "Naturally, you'll want to penetrate the inner mysteries of the Smithsonian while you're here," she says, assuring T. that "the mystery of the Smithsonian . . . is the mystery of life itself."

But a different sort of penetration occurs first. The guileless T., to begin with, gets lost inside the Iroquois diorama, allowing Vidal to get plenty of mileage out of the kitschy aspects of the Smithsonian and, by extension, of American culture. The Indians sound more Warner Brothers than Iroquois ("I take you to Chief Yellow Sky Bird. He big chief here, Puritan white boy"). They cook their succotash with Birds Eye frozen lima beans and step in and out of character with ease: "Joe Kennedy is our bootlegger," says the Chief. "We call him Great Hyannis Hyena." Soon T. finds himself in their cauldron along with the corn and Birds Eye, to be rescued—and seduced—by a delectable white woman in Indian dress, whom T. dubs "Squaw." "I'm a virgin," he gasps, "but I'm ready"; and soon "T. and his squaw were as one in total diluvian ecstasy."

Having finally escaped the perilous diorama and made his way back into the Smithsonian proper, T. decides to find out why his presence has been requested there. He discovers in the museum's basement a group of nuclear physicists, including Dr. Oppenheimer—"something of a nervous Nelly," as T. observes. Accompanied by Charles Lindbergh, they ask the brilliant T. to help them refine the atomic bomb they are in the process of inventing. T. obligingly comes up with a bomb that will pulverize buildings while sparing human life, but predictably the higher powers nix that one, preferring their own idea, a bomb where "you kill the people but save the real estate for the better angels and angles of our common nature."

Vidal has obviously been dabbling in the work of Stephen Hawking, and his slight, rather goofy plot nearly gets buried under a morass of amateurish scientific speculation on the nature of time and other mysteries. Science fiction is not really Vidal's thing, and the reader must simply plod on until the author turns to historical comedy, which he brings off with far more élan.

Finding himself able (I won't bother to go into the whys and wherefores) to insert himself into the past, T. tries to figure out at *what point the course of history might* profitably be changed so that the atomic bomb will not be developed, and life on earth not obliterated. He rules out the idea of murdering the infant Hitler: "I suspect . . . there would be another one just like him, maybe even worse." He proposes to go further back: if he can prevent Woodrow Wilson from being elected and bringing the United States into the First World War, Germany will not be forced to accept Wilson's demands at Versailles and the Second World War, rapidly approaching, will not take place.

The change is effected, and it will come as no surprise to the reader that all does not go as T. hoped. In the absence of Wilson, William Jennings Bryan achieved his lifelong ambition and made it to the White House (immediately ceasing to be Temperance upon arrival there). Bryan kept the U.S. out of the war, which in any case "petered out in a stalemate shortly after the Kaiser became a

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Christian Scientist." But T. had forgotten about the Japanese, and on the very day he arrives back in the present—June 25, 1940—they bomb Pearl Harbor, ahead of the original schedule, no less. The bomb-meisters are at work just as they were before T.'s time-tampering: they are simply a little further along. You can't stop progress, as the saying goes.

The quarrelsome first ladies from the inauguration gown exhibit do their part to try to save the situation, calling together a powwow of their husbands, from George Washington on down the line. Squaw turns out, in a surprise twist, to be Mrs. Grover Cleveland, and Grover himself becomes something of a mentor for T. Not all of the other presidents are as easygoing. Lincoln, for example, had his brains addled at the moment of death, and now spends all his time reading the homespun version of himself presented in Carl Sandburg's six-volume biography. James Buchanan dresses almost exclusively in drag. The eighteenth-century presidents are not very prepossessing when viewed from up close: T. "was struck not only by how small they all were, except Washington and Jefferson, but how pitted with scars their faces were. They looked like the Catholic boys from Gonzaga High School, famous throughout the district for their raging acne." Jefferson speaks intelligently—that is to say, he paraphrases Vidal's own opinions—but his voice is weak "and, to T.'s ear, just like the English actor Ronald Colman in *Lost Horizon*."

The current president is still Franklin Roosevelt, despite the historical meddling, but whatever changes T. has made in history have kept him from catching polio, and he is now "tall, portly, vigorous, red-faced, with a thrusting, somewhat brutal aristocratic charm." He is also far more honest about his imperialist ambitions.

The war with Japan proceeds apace, and by a series of freakish circumstances T. finds himself at Iwo Jima, where he is killed by a grenade, then reconstructed by Smithsonian scientists: resurrected on Easter Sunday, appropriately enough, since it was on Good Friday that he entered the Institution. And T. (which, we are told, stands for Time itself) finally meets and confronts the Wizard of Oz himself, that is, Dr. Smithson, still alive and living in the basement. Smithson assures T. that, finally, no one can change the future. "The human race will kill itself. That goes without saying. The virus—us—will kill our host the earth, or at least make it uninhabitable for us."

This view we know in fact to be Vidal's own, since he has expressed it in recent essays. But if Smithson has known this all along, then why did he put poor T. through all of that exhausting rigmarole? What difference does a century more or less make in the grim scheme of things? Any urgency the tale might have possessed is compromised, and T.'s long ordeal finally seems pointless: in fact the sooner humanity destroys itself, obviously, the better.

But in fact *The Smithsonian Institution* never pretends to be much more than a facetious play on American politics and history. It is full of private jokes and autobiographical elements that will be quickly recognized by readers of Vidal's bitchy memoir *Palimpsest*. And as satire it is funny but pointless, not so much Jonathan Swift as Ronald Firbank: when T. meets Lindy, for example, the only question he asks him is "How did you go to the bathroom when you were over the Atlantic? . . . I mean, number two."

The idea of changing twentieth-century history, and specifically of averting the Second World War, is also the concept behind Stephen Fry's *Making History*.[2] Fry, one of the most brilliant younger actors in England (his is the only really good portrayal of P. G. Wodehouse's Jeeves, and he stars as Oscar Wilde in the new film *Wilde*), is also widely thought, at least in England, to be a brilliant novelist: after the publication of his first two books, *The Liar* and *The Hippopotamus*, both jammed as full

2 *Making History*, by Stephen Fry; Random House, 380 pages, $24.

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as he could get them with outrageous comedy, he was compared in the British and American presses with Evelyn Waugh, Ronald Firbank, E. F. Benson, Monty Python, and Oscar Wilde himself.

Although he certainly can be funny, very funny on occasion, it is going too far to make comparisons like these, for the adjective that best describes Fry's humor is sophomoric. Not that there is anything wrong with sophomoric humor: on the contrary. But in itself it is not enough to produce first-rate satire or even first-rate comedy.

In *Making History*, his third novel, Fry is less concerned with getting laughs than he is with making a lasting contribution to the "alternate world" genre. Like Vidal, he is interested in World War II and the situation that gave rise to it; unlike him, he is primarily concerned with German history, not American. Just as Vidal has obviously been reading current theories of time and the universe, Fry has obviously been immersing himself in a book that has made quite a splash in the last couple of years: Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. Goldhagen's claim—which has created quite a bit of controversy—is that the Nazi agenda was not the handiwork of one crazed dictator, but was inevitable given the way German society had developed: that anti-Semitism had been pervasive throughout German culture for centuries and that the conditions following the First World War did not cause it, but merely helped it to flourish.

Fry's hero is Michael Young, a shy, rather nebbishy twenty-four-year-old graduate student at Cambridge University. He has just completed his doctoral dissertation, a detailed account of the antecedents and early life of Adolf Hitler. Quite by accident he meets a Dr. Leo Zuckermann, an elderly physicist in his college who came to England, so far as Michael knows, as a Jewish refugee from Hitler's Germany. But Zuckermann's father did not die in Auschwitz, as Michael had thought; he was a camp doctor there, one of the scientists who performed their grisly experiments upon the prisoners themselves. At the end of the war, he disappeared and his wife, fearing reprisals, masqueraded as a Jew and emigrated to America with little Leo.

Ever since he learned the secret of his birth, Zuckermann has been tormented with guilt and shame. Now he approaches Michael, as an authority on Hitler's early life. Zuckermann has developed, it turns out, a way of traveling back in time. How might he and Michael go back and prevent Hitler from being born?

They do so, with the result that Gore Vidal's T. intelligently predicted. Michael awakes in 1997, in a world that has never known Adolf Hitler. He is now, mysteriously, an American, a graduate student in philosophy at Princeton. At first he is elated. But as he slowly comes to his senses and gets to know the new world around him, he is in for a nasty surprise. There has been no Hitler; but there *has* been one Rudolf Gloder, an officer in the same regiment Hitler served in during World War I, a monomaniac and virulent anti-Semite who, in a series of moves very like Hitler's, founded the Nazi party and rose to power by taking advantage of Weimar Germany's demoralization.

Germany was ready for a führer, in other words: it was just a matter of which one presented himself. And the only difference between Hitler and Gloder is that Gloder proves to be by far the more successful. He possesses all the glittering attributes that Hitler did not: looks, charm, glamour, and sanity. During the 1930s, he forged, as Hitler never could, ties with power brokers throughout Europe and America, and even won the Nobel Peace Prize. When he embarked on his career of world domination, he conquered all of Europe and dropped atom bombs on the Soviet Union. America was able to hold out, but barely.

Now, in the 1990s, America is in a state of cold war with Greater Germany—that is, with all of Europe. European dissidents are

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occasionally able to escape to the United States: one such was Michael's father, another was Dr. Zuckermann (now with yet another name). It does not really come as a surprise to find that Zuckermann's father's career was not radically different under Gloder from what it was under Hitler: he still spent his war years hard at work exterminating European Jewry, although extermination under Gloder proceeded far more cleanly and efficiently than it did under Hitler: there are now no Jews at all left in Europe. The United States, as might be expected from a country in a state of siege, has developed into a repressive society. The Civil Rights movement, for example, never took place. The new world that Michael has brought into being is worse than the old one, and after a lot of dithering he reverses the train of events. "Somehow, mein fine Führer," he muses, looking at a photograph of Hitler, "I let you live. What does that make me?"

There is no doubt that Fry is a gifted and capable writer, but *Making History*, while suspenseful, is a frequently sloppy piece of work. There is no particular reason, for example, for him to have rendered two longish sections of the book in screenplay form; the impression he gives is of having simply been bored with conventional narrative, and of fooling around to amuse himself. The novel lacks the tautness that effective suspense requires, and Fry was not provided with the good editor he so sorely needed.

Still, there are some first-rate flights of fantasy. For instance, in the post-Gloder era, since the Germans run everything, technology, especially computer technology, is marvelous, far superior to the cumbersome and frustrating software of our own world: "I always knew Windows 95 was complete shit," exults Michael while reveling in the Princeton computer room. Fry can't resist showing off his sheer cleverness, and clever he certainly is: here, for example, is his take-off on Rupert Brooke, a "Grantchester" for the modern era:

> Say, stand the bollards yet in rows,
> Mute guardians of the contraflows?
> Are there stabbings after dark
> And is it still a bitch to park?

Fry is fairly skillful, but he is not quite as skillful as Vidal: he hasn't developed the older writer's gift for the unexpected, or his canniness in avoiding the obvious. But he has made a more serious, less smart-ass, effort to rewrite history, and as a result his book is more readable than Vidal's. Reading *The Smithsonian Institution*, one frequently stops to laugh at some well-executed joke, but the novel in its entirety is nothing but a carelessly cobbled together string of such jokes, some good, others less so. In the end, Vidal is more concerned with what readers think of what he thinks of history than he is with the story itself. Fry, on the other hand, seems genuinely interested in the story he is telling, and in the question he poses. Next to Vidal, the old pro, he is amateurish and clumsy, but in the end his book is easier to read and less self-indulgent.

As to which one of them invents the more credible alternate version of history—well, the adventures of both T. and Michael have succeeded in persuading this reader that history contains an infinite number of possible variations, and that to rewrite it with any confidence is impossible.

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Books

Southern literature reconstructed

by Richard Tillinghast

In an earlier generation, an anthology of Southern literature might have pictured on its cover a decaying antebellum mansion, its avenue of rusty cedars overgrown with wild honeysuckle, slave cabins falling into ruin in the background. On the cover of the new Norton anthology called *The Literature of the American South*, we see Nell Choate Jones's attractive 1946 painting "Georgia Red Clay."[1] Two large trees tower over a modest bungalow, past the front gate of which curves a red-dirt road. Plowed fields stretch to the horizon. Down the road, in the distance, one can just make out the back or side of a larger residence, probably the "big house."

Someone has chosen the cover art carefully, because this anthology sets out to efface the classic literature written—largely in this century—by white Southerners, and to replace it with a new, "revisionary" version whose underlying assumption seems to be that our interest in the South begins and ends with slavery and race relations. The results are unfortunate for readers with an interest in literature, since the white South—spurred by the defeat of its armies in 1865, and challenged by the subsequent destruction of its economy and culture—has produced in the twentieth century one of the world's most distinctive literatures, giving us America's greatest novelist, William Faulkner, and America's greatest playwright, Tennessee Williams, as well as other writers of genius, and many others of note.

The revisionist distortion of this remarkable literature is addressed cheerfully and with admirable candor in the preface by the general editor, Professor William L. Andrews of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who outlines his thinking about undertaking the assembling and publication of the current volume:

> By the time of its invitation to me, W. W. Norton had launched several new anthologies designed to reconstruct literary history and appeal to emerging reading audiences and emerging areas of literary study in new ways. *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (1985) had done so well that it was headed into a second edition. An anthology of American postmodern poetry was about to come out. Anthologies devoted to African-American and American Indian literatures were in the works. W. W. Norton was indeed connecting its destiny as a publisher to traditions and literatures that, until the mid-1980s, its anthologies' preoccupation with national cultures and overarching canons had for the most part neglected to explore.

How, then, to follow what sounds like a directive from Norton to fit the South's peculiar, largely backward-looking literature—by turns tragic, noble, colorfully vul-

1 *The Literature of the American South: A Norton Anthology*, edited by William L. Andrews et al.; Norton, 1,188 pages, $29.95.

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gar, eccentric, and weirdly comic—into the publisher's increasing preoccupation with a sociological approach and its desperate desire to be in on the new and "postmodern"? Andrews asks: "Could an anthology of southern literature . . . add new impetus and value to the reconstruction of American literary history and its literary canons that anthologists all over the United States had been engaged in during the last decade?" You bet!

Is literature about "dialogue"? I don't think so. "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry," Yeats famously wrote. The editors of this anthology think otherwise:

> We see southern literature as constituted by a diverse constituency [note the political term] of writers and traditions in dialogue (and sometimes in active dispute) with each other. For many years attention to the dialogue between black and white southern writers over race was muted to the point of silence by readers and critics who, when they spoke of 'southern literature,' tacitly agreed to confine their purview primarily to the writing of white men.

When Flannery O'Connor wrote "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," was it her intention to posit an argument in the centuries-long debate on human nature? I think not. Her story may be used to bolster the arguments of those who take evil seriously, but she was, in my view, creating a lasting object to leave behind, made of words—a testament about human nature, artfully wrenched out of her own life. And when William Faulkner wrote *The Sound and the Fury*, he was making something, not debating about something. His history of a Mississippi family affects us in the same way Greek tragedy does. Criticism may be a debating society; literature is not.

Andrews's ritual characterization of "white men," those devils of the academic establishment, is not in any case very accurate; twentieth-century Southern literature has notably been distinguished by the contributions of women writers. They have tended to go in for fiction rather than poetry. It is good to see Ellen Glasgow, Caroline Gordon, Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, and Elizabeth Spencer, from the generation born before 1930, represented here. While I am glad to see Doris Betts, Bobbie Ann Mason, Maya Angelou, and Lee Smith included among more contemporary fiction writers, the omissions in this area—most of them white authors—make the anthology useless as a guide to contemporary Southern fiction. Where are, to name only a few glaring omissions among women writers, Mary Lou Settle, Harper Lee, Elizabeth Cox, Jill McCorkle, Alison Hagy? Among male fiction writers, where are Barry Hannah, Madison Jones, Madison Smartt Bell, George Garrett (author of what I consider to be the greatest novel by any living American, *The Death of the Fox*)?

Every reader, by his or her own lights, makes the distinction between a good book and a bad book. One would presume that compilers of anthologies make the same distinctions. But on this issue as well, William L. Andrews, addressing "the so-called expansion of the canon of southern literature," is admirably frank about his anthology's watering-down of aesthetic criteria: "We consider race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, locality, and socioeconomic condition among those factors that require serious attention when assessing the literary contribution or the critical reception of many southern writers." If the issue really were an expansion of the canon—to the extent that anyone still regards the Norton anthologies as canonical, i.e., authoritative—there would be less of a problem. One could browse the entries that are interesting only on extraliterary grounds, and still read and appreciate the great literature the American South has produced.

This, unfortunately, leads us to the dirty little secret of affirmative action (and a more aggressively affirmative action anthology than this can hardly be imagined). To wit:

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the number of pages in an anthology is limited—in this case, to just under twelve hundred. To include certain writers, certain others must be excluded. These exclusions are what make *The Literature of the American South* not only unsatisfactory but also an insult to the many talented writers who have been left out—an insult because writers live or die by their connections with readers. Several generations of gifted poets and fiction writers are being left out, on demographic grounds, of a book that many, perhaps naïve, readers—primarily students—will regard as the last word on Southern literature.

Among authors from earlier generations not represented here, it is hard even to know where to start. Where are William Alexander Percy's 1941 memoir, *Lanterns on the Levee*—a copy of which was at one time to be found on the shelves of practically every educated Southern family; Donald Davidson's long poem, "Lee in the Mountains"; Andrew Lytle's novel, *The Velvet Horn*, Shelby Foote's *Civil War*? That's right, Shelby Foote is omitted entirely from this anthology! Perhaps the editors of the anthology encountered difficulties obtaining copyright clearance from Random House, but were that the case, no mention is made of it anywhere.

Perhaps Mr. Foote's powerful and truly popular work was excluded on the grounds that it was history rather than literature. But if distinctions like that were being made, what would be the logic then of including selections from W. J. Cash's *Mind of the South*? (Not that I would argue for leaving out that fine book.) Omitting selections from Shelby Foote's monumental narrative history of the Civil War from an anthology of Southern literature is the equivalent of leaving Gibbon out of an anthology of eighteenth-century English literature. Perhaps a few pages might have been shaved from the fifty-one allotted to the autobiography of Frederick Douglass to provide room for one or two excluded authors of genius.

And yet the logic behind these omissions is all too clear. In its revisionist thrust, the *Literature of the American South* aims to eviscerate the central mythos that has underpinned white Southern culture since 1865: the "Lost Cause" of the Confederacy. Today you will find little support among decent people in the South for racial discrimination; you would have to hunt high and low before dredging up apologists for slavery and segregation. The South has made its penance, done its soul-searching. Arguably it is the one section of our country that has come to terms with the legacy of slavery and racial injustice. Today it provides the most relaxed and harmonious racial climate to be found in the United States. If this were not the case, why would so many African-Americans be moving back to the South, back "home"?

Abraham Lincoln's most brilliant public relations achievement was that he succeeded in defining the Civil War as a war against slavery. The white South did not and does not on the whole see it that way. While acknowledging the evils of slavery, white Southerners justly take pride in the way their forebears fought a brave war against terrifying odds in defense of their impoverished and embattled homeland. Growing up in Memphis in the 1940s, I remember the cheap tintype print of Robert E. Lee mounted on Traveler that hung in our dining room, as it did in many Southern homes. What we and millions of other Southerners saw in Lee was not a slave owner but an exemplary Christian gentleman, a military commander of courage and panache who gave us something to feel proud about during the decades of economic ruin and loss of status that followed the war.

No decent purpose is served by the bullying, triumphalist approach of this Norton anthology. The reasoning seems to be that black pride and self-assertion can only be served by ruthlessly crushing the white South's understanding of its own history. This book exemplifies perfectly why the term "political correctness" should more ac-

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curately be called "political correction," its aim being to correct, shame, and punish those who do not adhere to its orthodoxies. No wonder that Professor Andrews describes W. W. Norton's purpose in its new anthologies as to "*reconstruct* literary history" (italics mine). The punitive impulse of political Reconstruction following the Civil War is echoed in the cultural reconstruction of a project like this.

When one turns to the authors who are included, other questions arise. William Styron is, predictably, represented only by selections from his controversial novel *Nat Turner*. Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus stories, apart from being classics, should have recommended themselves to the editors by virtue of their status as West African folk tales transplanted to America. One and one-third pages are given to Uncle Remus's story of the Tar-Baby. Then we have Harris's affecting but rather bathetic short story called "Free Joe and the Rest of the World," a story which could have been written by dozens of modestly talented fiction writers. This story gives a sympathetic insight into the plight of the newly freed slave. But why not give Joel Chandler Harris the space to do what he does better than any other writer?

Mary Boykin Chesnut of South Carolina was a diarist of genius on a par with the eighteenth-century English writer Lady Mary Wortley Montague. She has much to tell us about upper-class Southern life during the war. Predictably, she comes to us in the current book solely as a feminist and critic of slavery. Observations like the following are chilling: "Like the patriarchs of old our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines, and the mulattoes one sees in every family exactly resemble the white children—and every lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household, but those in her own she seems to think drop from the clouds, or pretends so to think." Again, social insights like these are important, but her rich tapestry is cut by the Norton editors to illustrate the only points they deem worth making. Whenever possible—even when dealing with major figures like Flannery O'Connor and Eudora Welty—the editors pick stories dealing with race.

The introductions to sections of the anthology and to individual authors have been written, on the whole, in a spirited and informed fashion. Still, is Thomas Jefferson's having been a slave owner the most important aspect of his life? This is what we are led to believe in the introduction to his segment of this book, which closes with the following sentences: "'Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate,' he asserted in his *Autobiography* (published posthumously in 1830), 'than that these [enslaved] people are to be free.' But at his death on July 4, 1826, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson still owned more than one hundred slaves." Every writer knows the importance of closing remarks; what I have quoted above is how thousands if not millions of students of Southern literature will be asked to remember the author of the Declaration of Independence, arguably America's greatest architect, vice-president and then president of the United States.

Perhaps the gravest harm inflicted by this ill-conceived anthology is the distorted picture it gives of contemporary Southern poetry. A sign of the hard times that poetry has fallen on in a society that is fast losing its ability to read anything at all challenging is that poetry has become fair game for critics with various extraliterary axes to grind. The selections in poetry present a glaring distortion of the achievements of Southern poets and as such represent a grave injustice to writers whose work should by rights become known to the students and teachers who use the Norton anthologies.

Why is James Dickey, the contemporary South's most considerable poet, accorded only seven pages—the same number given over to the works of Sonia Sanchez, Laura H. Cornell Professor of English at Temple University in Philadelphia? For readers un-

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familiar with Ms. Sanchez's work, it is represented here by such gems as "we a baddDDD people," the ending of which runs as follows:

> git em with yo bad self. gon. rat now.
> go on & do it. dudley. rat now. yeah.
> run it on down. gwen. rat now. yeah. yeah.
> aaa-e-oooooooo. wah / wah.
> aaa-e-oooooooo. wah / wah.
> we a BAAAADDD people
>
> & we be gitting
> BAAAADDER
>
> every day.

"Sonia Sanchez," the introduction to her work informs us, "has been a voice of advocacy for black creativity and change over the past three decades. . . . Consistently popular with audiences who appreciate her messages as well as her energy, Sanchez is now one of the griots [a word familiar to readers of the twenty-page selection from Alex Haley's *Roots*] from the 1960s, a seasoned and mature person of wisdom and insight who continues to write, publish, and delight her audiences with poetry that always carries a message."

The space given Sonia Sanchez (b. 1934 in Alabama) was space not made available for the magnificent work of Charles Wright (b. 1935 in Tennessee), the winner of this year's Pulitzer Prize, the contemporary heir in this country to Ezra Pound, and arguably the outstanding American poet of his generation. Several important contemporary poets, one of them African-American, are to be found in these ill-starred pages: Fred Chappell, Dave Smith, Ellen Bryant Voigt, Yusef Komunyakaa, R. T. Smith, and Andrew Hudgins. But why include the dismal poetry of Alice Walker? Here is a stanza from her "We Have a Beautiful Mother":

> We have a beautiful
> mother
> Her oceans
> are wombs
> Her wombs
> oceans.

Because many Americans now get their one and only introduction to literature in college, students who will be assigned to read second-rate authors like Sanchez and Walker will perhaps never have the chance to read poets like Alvin Aubert (who happens to be black), James Applewhite, Diann Blakely, David Bottoms, Edgar Bowers, Turner Cassity, R. H. W. Dillard, R. S. Gwynn, T. R. Hummer, Rodney Jones, Donald Justice, Susan Ludvigson, Everette Maddox, Robert Morgan, Naomi Shihab Nye, Wyatt Prunty, Patiann Rogers, Gibbons Ruark, James Seay, Leon Stokesbury, Dabney Stuart, Henry Taylor (winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1985), James Whitehead, Miller Williams, John Wood, C. D. Wright (who happen to be white), and other contemporary Southern poets too numerous to mention. Fortunately there is *The Made Thing: An Anthology of Contemporary Southern Poetry*, edited by Leon Stokesbury (1987, and soon to be reissued). But it appeared under the imprint of the University of Arkansas Press and will not reach the thousands who will be required to buy the Norton Anthology.

There are bright spots amidst the gloom. It is a treat to see many of one's old favorites gathered under one cover: *A Streetcar Named Desire* printed in its entirety; a story by the incomparable Reynolds Price; selections from *The Last Gentleman*, by Walker Percy; a masterly, enigmatic short story by Peter Taylor, "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time"; Faulkner, of course; chapter 2 of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* with its devastating sketch of the white Northern benefactor who visits the black Southern college to which he has contributed money ("upon you depends the outcome of the years I have spent in helping your school. That has been my real life's work, not my banking or my researches, but my first-hand organizing of human life"). I was glad to be introduced to fiction by Albert Murray, a

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black writer on jazz whose work I admire. And I enjoyed the selections from Henry Louis Gates's splendid memoir, *Colored People*.

What a pity the officious editors of W. W. Norton's latest disaster, busy deconstructing and reconstructing the achievements of generations of Southern writers, could not have let themselves be guided by the impulse to present college students with a genuine experience of what actually moves, teaches, and delights us in literature, rather than yet another dreary example of what we *ought* to appreciate.

Radical moderation

Daniel A. Farber and Suzanna Sherry, Beyond All Reason: The Radical Assault on Truth in American Law. Oxford University Press, 195 pages, $25

reviewed by Marc M. Arkin

Recently, a colleague described to me a colloquium that he had just attended. The subject was a draft paper written by one of the participants; the topic was the reception of newly freed African Americans into society during Reconstruction. Slightly bewildered, he reported that the paper appeared to argue that granting former slaves the legal right to marry was actually a bad thing—a way for the dominant culture to force its hegemonic institutions on a subject population and to impose racist and gendered legal norms on previously private consensual relationships. In fact, he said, the writer seemed to claim that the varied, fluid, "egalitarian" and "communal" sexual relationships among slaves rendered slave society superior—at least in this regard—to nineteenth-century white society.

On closer inspection, it turns out that the writer intended to join the critique of "rights-based strategies" on behalf of "abject groups," the point being that the effort to gain inclusion in the dominant institutions of society initiates regulation by a "bureaucratic juridical apparatus" which itself becomes an instrument of further subordination while generating inauthenticity and false consciousness. However, as my informant nervously recognized, an uncharitable reader—like myself, perhaps—could find in this argument a backhanded defense of slavery, about which I used to believe it was socially inappropriate to say anything good.

This is the world of legal academia. I tell you this story to show that I, too, can participate in the scholarship of narrative that has come to dominate my craft. I, too, can toss about the language of gendered hierarchies and socially constructed reality that constitutes postmodern legal scholarship. I also tell you this story in the full knowledge that I will not lunch in this town again.

It is this disturbing combination of intellectual wooliness and implicit intimidation that has prompted Daniel Farber and Suzanna Sherry's new book, *Beyond All Reason: The Radical Assault on Truth in American Law*. Professors Farber and Sherry both teach at the University of Minnesota Law School and have published widely on constitutional law and legal scholarship. They are, in their politics, conventional liberals. They know whereof they speak.

Farber and Sherry take as their target the avant-garde wing of the so-called multicultural movement, which they define as sharing the belief that all cultures are equal, that no common culture is possible, and—perhaps somewhat inconsistently—that Western culture should be overthrown in the interests of empowering the downtrodden. Stripped to its essentials, Farber and Sherry's book argues that the ideology of radical multiculturalism "fails on its own terms because it cannot support the kind of world that it seeks to create or maintain," a world of absolute egalitarianism.

By and large, the book is an effort to engage in a scholarly dialogue with the radicals, beginning with a description of their views and moving to a critique of the consequences of their positions. The book is

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well-researched, well-written, evenhanded, and, at some fundamental level, surprisingly naïve. It is as if Farber and Sherry cannot quite swallow the fact that people—responsible people, tenured law professors at that—really believe these things, that they really reject the premises of the Enlightenment and liberal democracy while enjoying their benefits. But then, it does strain credulity to find that a tenured law professor would write that "racism and enlightenment are the same thing" and that "if you are black or Mexican, you should flee Enlightenment-based democracies like mad, assuming you have any choice." Yet, the author of both statements is Richard Delgado, one of the more well-published and sought-after multiculturalists.

As Farber and Sherry put it, the whole radical enterprise boils down to a single breathtakingly simple insight: "reality is socially constructed by the powerful to perpetuate their own hegemony." It is the marriage of American legal realism with French deconstructionism, presided over by hard Left politics. The goal of the radicals is ostensibly to expose the racism, sexism, and other pathologies that inhabit the present legal regime and to argue for change in the interests of its victims.

Of course, multiculturalism is not as simple or benign as all that. If reality is socially constructed in the interests of the powerful, so are all forms of knowledge and all conceptions of merit. There is no such thing as objectivity. None of this is surprising to the readers of this journal. What is surprising are the jejune turns that deconstructionism takes when left in the hands of amateurs, namely law professors.

As Farber and Sherry detail, chief among the radicals' claims is that women and minorities have distinctive nonrational ways of knowing things not accessible to members of the majority culture, a privileged knowledge that is expressed in a unique "voice" of color and gender. This, of course, tends to put the kibosh on reasoned discourse. It also makes persuasion rather problematic. As an answer to that problem, the radicals offer a new form of scholarship: narrative and storytelling, through which they hope to bring about an intuitive frisson of recognition and, consequently, insight in their audience.

But, Farber and Sherry explain, narrative has turned into autobiography. And, they lament, this has some unpleasant results. First of all, reliance on autobiographical accounts has led to some nasty intramural debates on authenticity—who has the right kind of experience to speak for women, gays, or people of color—and some extremely ugly attacks on outsiders who attempt to criticize these accounts, since, by definition, all criticism is personal. What is more, as University of Virginia law professor Anne Coughlin has written, many of the autobiographical stories are, by ordinary standards, inaccurate, as the writers seek to fit themselves into the categories of minority experience. Fortunately for them, as the radical Alex Johnson has said, "it is perfectly acceptable . . . if that which is presented as the truth turns out not to be objectively true." (For her pains, Coughlin was denounced by the aforementioned Richard Delgado for "coming perilously close to replicating the sin of the slave master" described by a feminist literary critic who worried that, by applying literary theory to texts by black writers, white feminists replicate a slave owner writing a "ruthlessly reductive" account of the behavior of his slaves.)

Even leaving aside autobiography and authenticity, Farber and Sherry point out, the radical critique of objectivity has unfortunate consequences for more traditional legal scholarship, which frequently deals with the history of laws and institutions such as the Federal Constitution. Without a concept of objective truth or fact, there is no defense against even the most outrageous distortions of history since, after all, everything is a matter of perspective. In practice, social constructionism has led to a rather insouciant attitude toward facts—particularly inconvenient facts—among radi-

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cal legal scholars. Thus, Patricia Williams, a black law professor at Columbia University, says it doesn't matter whether Tawana Brawley was lying or telling the truth about being the victim of a racist assault; either way she "was the victim of some unspeakable crime—and even if she did it to herself." Williams also accepts one of the more outré assertions of Afrocentrism, namely that Beethoven was black. This kind of thinking makes rational discourse about policy issues unlikely at best.

As Farber and Sherry conclude, the radical critique both is non-falsifiable and ignores the values central to liberal democracy and to a democratic citizenry, including rationality and tolerance. What Farber and Sherry cannot bring themselves to admit is that the radicals simply do not care about the same things they do, including facts, rationality, and tolerance.

The problem is that it is difficult to say anything new about these trends in legal scholarship and what is probably the most original part of Farber and Sherry's book—the discussion of meritocracy—is arguably its weakest. For, interestingly, Farber and Sherry's argument is limited by its own version of identity politics. There is an old vaudeville joke whose punchline, I believe, goes something like, "Well, yes, but is it good for the Jews?" At times, Farber and Sherry's book seems like a 145-page set-up for that punchline.

Farber and Sherry contend that the radical assertion that conventional notions of merit simply reflect "what white men value about themselves" is inherently anti-Semitic and, in addition, that the radicals' rejection of the Enlightenment has anti-Semitic implications. It is this claim of bias—extended to encompass anti-Asian sentiment as well—that rests at the heart of Farber and Sherry's assertion that the radical ideology is internally inconsistent. In fact, they argue, the radicals "have it exactly backwards" because the Enlightenment's commitment to reason and merit provides a way to escape oppressive regimes that allocate benefits on the basis of irrelevant characteristics such as race.

It seems, however, that Farber and Sherry are themselves a little overeager to claim the coveted status of victim. They begin from the observation that Jews and Asians are successful out of all proportion to their numbers. In particular, they note, Jews comprise about 2.5 percent of the total population, but constitute as much as 50 percent of the faculty at some elite law schools. Indeed, as Farber and Sherry feel compelled to tell us, they themselves are Jewish, although by their own reasoning this ought to be of no import. As I understand their argument, it boils down to this: Jews are a minority subject to discrimination, yet they have succeeded under the current meritocratic regime. Thus, when radicals argue that Jews are occupying spaces that ought to go to persons of color and other oppressed groups, their claim is inherently anti-Semitic. Farber and Sherry further suggest that the radicals have only four explanations for Jewish success, all unacceptably racist: either Jews have sold out to majority standards, are members of a worldwide conspiracy, are collaborators with the current empowered elites, or have themselves inappropriately influenced American culture.

Even if this were an exhaustive catalogue of possible radical explanations for Jewish success—which I doubt—I am not certain that the thrust of the radical position is truly anti-Semitic so much as antiestablishment. Although Derrick Bell may be a fellow traveler with the Reverend Louis Farrakhan—and has, in his own right, said some ugly things about Jews—Jews do not figure in his writings as special targets, but as cogs in a white power structure that oppresses persons of color.

It is here that Farber and Sherry are most hampered by their inability to accept that the radical critique is as radical as it purports to be. If law schools are performing the wrong tasks, then people who disproportionately succeed at those tasks ought not to be there. Only if you believe that law

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schools are performing the right tasks does the radical critique become arguably anti-Semitic or anti-Asian.

Yet, as I read Farber and Sherry's dispassionate treatment of the radical literature, I was struck by something I had never noticed before. The radical multiculturalists harbor a more pessimistic view of human nature than the most ardent believer in original sin. After all, even the most rock-ribbed Calvinist believes in the possibility that divine grace can raise us out of our brutish state. But multiculturalists see us all as irrational beings driven by appetite and a lust for domination over others. If we are exposed to malignant influences—say, pornography or racist language—we immediately internalize their messages and act accordingly. It is for this reason that the radicals reject the Enlightenment's faith in the marketplace of ideas and argue that society must suppress all distasteful speech and images.

But, having reduced civil society to something fairly close to the Hobbesian state of nature—a war of each group against all—the multiculturalists can only demand more of the world's goods from the already empowered. Theirs is a world without a coherent account of justice, human dignity, rights, or altruism; indeed, they deny the possibility of a universal account of justice or human dignity. Lacking a moral call on those in power, they cannot supply a reason—short of fear—why "haves" should share with the "have nots" of this world. Indeed, given their belief in socially conditioned mindsets, as an epistemological matter it is difficult to understand how the empowered are even to recognize the plight of outsiders. Instead, as I have said elsewhere, if power is the only thing in society, we all might as well sign up for militia training at the first opportunity.

There is, moreover, a strangely insular quality to the entire debate, since, as far as I can tell, it is largely fought out over hiring and tenure standards for professors at American law schools. Now, law school faculties are a not a particularly representative community of the oppressed. And as Farber and Sherry note, statistics kept by the Association of American Law Schools indicate that minorities are far more likely to be hired for law school faculty positions than white candidates; that between 20 and 25 percent of new faculty hired at law schools are people of color; that the percentage of black women on law school faculties is far higher than the percentage of black women lawyers. Indeed, one unpublished study circulating in the legal underground purports to demonstrate that the most underrepresented group on American law school faculties is white Protestant Republican women. While Farber and Sherry offer this as a prime example of the type of facts that radicals tend to ignore, I might instead argue that the composition of law faculties is a problem less pressing than, say, world hunger and genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda. As the Harvard Law School professor Randall Kennedy—a black man—observed after a Columbia faculty workshop brutally skewered him for his suggestion that ordinary standards of merit might have some role to play in tenure decisions of persons hired by law schools under affirmative action, this is an issue that is hardly immediate to the lives of ordinary members of minority communities, including people living not five blocks north of the Columbia campus.

On the other hand, as Farber and Sherry thoughtfully point out, the significance of multiculturalism's foothold in the legal academy is that lawyers, unlike English professors, actually affect public policy. It is Catherine MacKinnon—recently listed among the fifty most influential women lawyers in America by a widely read trade publication—who has brought us much of the current law regarding sexual harrassment in the work place. It is Stanley Fish—a Milton scholar defected to Duke Law School—who has helped to bring us campus speech codes that restrict the range of expression among students. And, it is their students who will be the lawyers and the

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policy makers of tomorrow's government.

If there is any serious flaw in Farber and Sherry's work, it is that the book is too moderate, that it makes too much of an effort to meet its subject more than halfway. With its own lucid prose and irenic tone, the book gives credibility to the lunatic arguments it criticizes. As folks used to say back in the Sixties, "Moderation in the defense of liberty is no virtue."

Proved upon the pulse

Andrew Motion Keats.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 655 pages, $35

reviewed by Eric Ormsby

The life mask of John Keats, taken by his friend Benjamin Robert Haydon in December of 1816, when the twenty-year-old poet had only five years to live, reveals a face which even in forced repose seems suffused with sentience. The eyes, whose exact color none of his friends could later remember but whose flashing vivacity none of them ever forgot, are pressed shut while the surface of the skin over the taut rondure of the cheeks and the strangely emphatic mouth appears to breathe life in through every pore with what Keats himself once called "atoms of perception." The face is disturbingly beautiful; it is a face entirely lacking in those inexpressive tracts, those little fens of inertia, that often mark human features. Keats's mobility of expression, which all his friends and acquaintances noted as well, is stilled by the grip of plaster and yet there persists a tremulous sense of what I can only term caesura, as though the poet's features hovered on the verge of some impending quicksilver flutter of transformation.

In a certain intuitive sense the life mask appears to tell us all we need to know of Keats the man: his sensuousness, his delicate intelligence, his powerfully compacted virility of demeanor, even his rather robust melancholy. Still, it would require the shrewdest physiognomist to infer from these features the astonishment of the poetry. It is to the poet's life, as recorded by his biographers, that we must turn if we are to animate, however flittingly, that immobile but compelling mask and to come even slightly closer to understanding the miraculous creativity of Keats's "great year." For while his incomparable letters fall within a four-year span, almost all the greatest poems were written from approximately the end of 1818 to the end of 1819. (Keats's intense blossoming-time makes other prodigies, like Rimbaud, seem slow workers.) In a famous aphorism, contained in a letter to his friend John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats wrote that "axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses." So, too, I would argue, with biographies of John Keats: a life so abrupt and yet so brimming with luxuriance (both of pain and of pleasure) demands to be measured not solely in documents and chronologies but in the pulse and counterpulse of a vivid empathy.

Keats has not lacked biographers. In the twentieth century, there have been several major studies, such as that of the American poet Amy Lowell in 1925; in the Sixties, in particular—surprising profusion from so un-Keatsian a decade!—three superb biographies appeared, each of which can justly claim to be considered a "classic." In 1963, the biographies of Walter Jackson Bate and of Aileen Ward were published, followed in 1968 by that of Robert Gittings (himself a poet as well as scholar). Each of these has its own distinctive merits and, from the perspective of a quarter-century's distance, all three now appear complementary rather than competing.

What need can there be of a further life of Keats? This new account by English poet and biographer Andrew Motion, following on the heels of Stephen Coote's 1995 biography, would appear to be superfluous. And yet, while the life of Keats is a matter of historical record, it is also a prime instance of poetic myth. For many decades, but espe-

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cially in Victorian England, Keats was reduced to a kind of doomed and swooning apotheosis of "poesy." As Shelley, chief instigator of this false image, put it in *Adonais*, Keats was "like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished." (Even so astute a reader as the young Marianne Moore, in one of her recently published letters, could playfully dismiss "Sheats"—her own amalgam, apparently, of both Shelley and Keats—because of such vaporous posturings.) But it is clear, too, that at several crucial moments in his career, Keats himself—consciously, if somewhat ingenuously—engaged in an essential self-creation on a mythopoeic level. This fierce and deliberate self-modeling occurred in the course of a bleak and often brutal life. His mother abandoned her children and returned only to suffer an agonizing death. Keats, still practically a child, nursed her to the end. Later he cared for his beloved younger brother Tom until the latter also died. Keats's own physical and psychic sufferings—his despair, his legendary fits of rage, his profound sense of exclusion, especially after the harsh reviews of his first publications—tormented him as well. Given these circumstances, Keats could almost be viewed as a *poète maudit avant la lettre*, if it were not for his own cheerful, frank, and genial temperament. Given so intricate a personality, which the pumice of legend has buffed to a high luster, it is only to be expected that new biographies will appear and continue to appear, even if no new facts about Keats accompany them.

In his introduction, Motion notes that even the best of the earlier biographies of Keats tended "to imply that his drive to self-realisation was determined by largely personal considerations" and to portray him as a pure "aesthetician," aloof from the swirling currents of his age. Motion thus wishes to correct an apparent distortion in our view of Keats, and it is to his credit, I think, that he undertakes this correction, even if he is not always successful. (His historical or political readings of several of the poems are jejune and unconvincing.) On the favorable side, however, Motion is good at situating Keats in the life of his time. He details, to a far greater extent than his predecessors, the passionate commitment which Keats maintained to certain styles of "radical" politics, especially as associated with the circle of Leigh Hunt. Motion is also quite skilled at describing individuals and at evoking places; consider, for one example, his precise and suggestive description of London in 1815, when Keats first moved there:

> Close to the southern end of London Bridge, which carried the main road to Kent, [Southwark] was crammed with coaches ferrying passengers and wagons laden with food. Its open ditches, full of stinking waste, were "considered the worst in England." Its streets were violent. Its skyline showed not only the silhouette of hospitals—Guy's and St. Thomas's faced each other across the street in which Keats lived—but also the grim outline of the ruined Clink, which had been burned by rioters in 1780, the old Marshalsea Prison, and the new Marshalsea (which appears in *Little Dorrit*) that had been begun in 1811. Beyond these the ground sloped away to a slum district known as the Mint, which sprawled along the flank of a shallow valley above yet another prison: the King's Bench Prison. Keats himself referred to the area as a "beastly place in dirt, turnings and windings."

As this excerpt shows, Motion writes a lucid and swiftly paced prose, and his biography is correspondingly brisk and professional throughout. An accomplished biographer (best known heretofore for his 1993 life of Philip Larkin, a book which received quite mixed reviews largely because of the opprobrium which it inspired, perhaps unintentionally, against its hapless subject), Motion knows how to craft a narrative which draws on his more scholarly predecessors without at the same time either parroting their findings or groveling before their examples. (His main reliance is upon Gittings's biography which he does not,

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however, follow slavishly; indeed, he sometimes takes sharp exception both to Gittings's findings and to his interpretations of key events.) Motion's biography contains a wealth of illustrations, including seventy-three plates and twenty-three facsimiles of Keats's drafts and letters, all of which enhance and illumine the narrative. There are scrupulous endnotes; the bibliography is useful, if brief (I was surprised, among other omissions, not to find listed E. C. Pettet's *On the Poetry of Keats*, published in 1970 by Cambridge); and there is a good index. Furthermore, the book itself has been edited with care (I spotted only four misprints in over six hundred pages) and is well designed and handsomely produced. I emphasize these technical matters because, alas, they can no longer be taken for granted in English or American imprints.

Motion's detachment is often admirable, but over the long course of the book, it can prove discomfiting. There is an imperturbability to Motion's prose, and to his reactions to Keats's life and poetry, which threatens to alienate the reader. This is not exactly English "understatement" (though it is certainly that, too) but, rather, and more troubling, a kind of clinical dispassion which, while it can sometimes be effective, too often impresses the reader as unfeeling. When Motion describes Keats's medical training—when, for example, he recounts how Keats's job was to restrain and stifle surgical patients while they were being operated upon without anesthetic—the sheer brute agony of the experience would overwhelm and repel the reader if presented in a more emotional style; as it is, the studious "neutral tones" of the biographer convey the human suffering with appalling effect. In this regard, Motion's narrative of Keats's terminal illness and of the agony of body and spirit the poet had to endure is so bleak as to be almost unendurable for the reader. Motion presents the pain, rage, horror, and despair of the dying Keats more powerfully, it seems to me, than any previous biographer. In his account of Keats's last months, there is pity and terror, in the original Aristotelian sense, though without any healing catharsis. "We cannot be created for this sort of suffering," Keats declared in a final letter, and, through Motion's narrative tact, we come to believe every word.

Despite Motion's reserve, the sheer misery of so much of Keats's life, detailed here in all its wincing minutiae, simply cannot leave the reader unmoved. Yet, as the excruciating inventory accumulates, one longs for the biographer to warm with sympathy, however momentarily, toward his writhing protagonist. The extent to which empathy (or antipathy) for his subject should move a biographer is, of course, a thorny question, and one for which there is no perfect answer. Before making any final judgment of Motion's unflinching aplomb, however, the reader should at least glance at another of his writings on Keats, the long prose meditation called "Sailing to Italy," in *Salt Water*, Motion's 1997 collection of verse. This takes as its subject Keats's first, and final, voyage to Italy in September 1820 and is juxtaposed against Motion's own recent sailing voyage to Italy (in Keats's wake, as it were). Whether or not it is finally successful as poetry, "Sailing to Italy" makes plain Motion's strong empathy with Keats and his struggles to achieve some closer identification. By Motion's own admission, however, Keats's "voice" remains unreachable to him, and this may explain much about the biography as well.

Motion has divided his story into fifty-four chapters in which he provides succinct vignettes of any number of fascinating personalities within Keats's orbit. Generally, these are cameos, rarely extending beyond a page or two, but they are so astutely rendered as to imprint their subjects sharply upon the mind. Thus, of the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon (he of the life mask), Motion writes that he was "a bull-necked, wide-browed, balding man whose large flustered face was pincered by little round spectacles, and whose laughter, [Leigh] Hunt said, 'sound[s] like the trumpets of Jericho. . . .' His explosive energy was a

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byword among all who knew him." This is the same Haydon who labored for years on his grandiose canvas *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, now forgotten, in which the painter himself figures as Christ (and Keats appears in profile). Leigh Hunt, poet and radical (and the model for the odious Harold Skimpole in *Bleak House*), comes through as a man of extreme contrast, brazenly self-seeking but at other times kind and good. Generally speaking, however, poets (with the exception of the tragic John Clare, whom Keats befriended) come off badly, and no doubt deservedly so; Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth, in particular, are shown as the vain and callous monsters they all too often were. Motion brings these and many others to life in their own words or in the accounts of contemporaries or through the utterly unforgettable letters which Keats wrote to them. Obscure figures from the affectionate circle of Keats's boyhood friends or such villains as the skinflint Richard Abbey, duplicitous guardian of the Keats children from 1814 on, flicker vividly with at times an almost Dickensian intensity. Motion's portrait of Fanny Brawne is wonderfully rendered; it is to his credit that over the course of his account we come to understand how Keats could have been so drawn to this frivolous and yet profoundly steadfast young woman (included is a stunning ambrotype of her taken in 1850, more than twenty-five years after Keats's death, and she is still at once pensive and sensual —the embodiment of Keatsian femininity).

Motion's biography is also quite good in providing capsule accounts of those historical moments and movements which had so marked an effect upon Keats, such as the Peterloo Massacre of 1819. In Motion's account, Keats emerges as steeped to his eyeballs in current, especially radical, activities. Keats (*pace* his academic commentators) was not some "pure poet" in the Mallarméan sense. Understanding Keats's radical sympathies makes much more comprehensible, for example, the cruel reception of his first publications, for he was by then already publicly linked with such flaming figures as Leigh Hunt in the minds of his critics, and denounced accordingly. Motion falters in this regard, it seems to me, where he attempts to read specific political interpretations into the poems. He even advocates what he calls a "socially conscious reading," whatever that may mean, while his own readings fall decidedly short in the "social" as well as in the aesthetic sense. Keats the man, and even Keats the man in his intentions as a poet, may have been an intensely political, even radical, individual, as Motion argues, but the final fruits of all these agitations, Keats's poems themselves, possess a lambent serenity of tone and profundity of regard that make political considerations quite secondary.

Motion's interpretations of Keats's work, rather than his political emphasis, represent the chief problem with his biography. In accord with his brisk approach, Motion inserts concise discussions of individual poems into his chapters alongside his more sharply delineated vignettes. Had I been asked before reading Motion's biography of Keats what I might most have expected to glean from this oft-told story, I would have instinctively replied, I think, that it was the prospect of a biography of one poet by another poet that held out the largest promise. The irreplaceable value of such a biography would lie in the insight which a fellow craftsman could bring to bear on so fabulously gifted a poet as John Keats. After all, we don't particularly anticipate such insight from the more scholarly works of Bate or Ward (though, of course, they do provide it). It is hard to imagine a less "Keatsian" poet than the understated, if not repressed, Motion, but we are right, I think, to expect that he will offer us some privileged illumination of the marvels, as well as the technical subtleties, of Keats's art. Regrettably, nothing appears to have been further from his aim.

Motion can be perceptive on certain of the poems. His observations on the relation between Keats's medical training and his concomitant view of poetry as "healing"

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and "medicinal" are astute and well taken. Sometimes, too, Motion proffers a striking and succinct formulation, as in his nicely enigmatic remark that in the "Ode to Psyche" Keats "turns the nowhere of the imagination into an anatomical somewhere—virgin but possessed, mysterious but lit." Motion's extended discussion of *Endymion*—over fifty pages interwoven with narrative—is frequently insightful; too often, though, his comments are perfunctory, and they can veer quite suddenly into the tasteless. Thus, on page 380, Motion describes a sonnet as "imitating certain masturbatory self-fingerings." (Unoriginal as well as tasteless: Motion is merely echoing the repellent opinions of Byron, who did so much to belittle Keats during Keats's lifetime and after his death.)

More disturbingly perhaps, why does Motion not attend to what is so conspicuous a feature of Keats's greatest verse: his patterns of verbal melody? There is in Keats a precise and subtle melodiousness not heard in English since the days of Milton or Shakespeare. Keats himself was fully aware of this. According to his friend Bailey, cited by Motion, "One of [Keats's] favourite topics of discourse was the principle of melody in Verse, upon which he had his own notions, particularly in the management of open & closed vowels." Even the casual reader of Keats at once encounters this distinctive vocalic palette; throughout the poems there is especially what might be termed a sheer iridescence of vowels. Perhaps Motion felt that any but the swiftest discussion would hobble his narrative. But if a poet will not bring us closer to an understanding of lines that, in Keats's words, "leave the dinned air vibrating silverly," who will? With respect to craft itself, Motion pays scant attention to Keats the apprentice poet. Despite the genius of, say, the early *Endymion*, Keats could perpetrate atrocious verses. For example, when he rhymes "the Orphean lute" with "listening to't" (book 2, lines 164–65), the unintended (and apparently unheard) "toot" completely sideswipes the sublimity he attempts. How did Keats manage to move, and move so quickly, from this initial clumsiness to such suave mastery in his control of language? Such questions are left unposed as well as unanswered.

Keats remains famous for his notion of "negative capability," that state of inmost receptivity which permits the poet a seemingly boundless capacity for transformation. Motion does discuss this, of course (though in nothing like either the depth or the scope of Bate's treatment in his 1963 biography), but again, without drawing on his own instincts as poet. Keats's conception of the poet as a "chameleon," as a being lacking in any distinctive flamboyance of his own, is utterly at odds with poetry as it is practiced nowadays in America, and it would have been good to have a contemporary English poet's reaction to this. For Keats, the poet is "the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity," as he put it in a letter to his friend Richard Woodhouse. This Keatsian conception of the poet is still so radical that it leaves all our "experimental" and "celebrity" poet-performers, concerned more with coiffuring their pompadours than with crafting their cadences, looking quite staid and dull. Motion does have some insights to offer on this, as when he remarks that a poet is one "whose ego is subordinate to a sensuous intelligence," but these are, sadly, few and far between.

If Motion is disappointing on the poetry, he is still splendid on the life. He may not evince emotion but he understands, and knows how to convey, what Keats endured. Of Keats on his deathbed at 26 Piazza di Spagna in Rome, Motion writes a lapidary summation that rings like an epitaph: "Keats lay in death where he had always lived: on the edge of things, defined by exclusion." Keats's death mask, taken the next day, is the obverse of the cast made five years previously and reveals a visage carved by suffering itself out of the faunlike beauty of the once living face.

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Notebook

Lionel Trilling in the classroom

by Jeffrey Hart

A wry anecdote circulated at Columbia University as the presidential election of 1952 approached. It was rumored that an Eisenhower-for-President meeting had been held on the campus and that only one faculty member had attended. All the rest were janitors, clerical staff, buildings-and-grounds people, athletic coaches, and so forth. Virtually the entire faculty was enthusiastic about the stylish and articulate Adlai Stevenson, but would no doubt have supported just about any liberal Democrat.

It has to be understood, of course, that in 1952 liberalism was very different from the New Left frenzy that severely wounded Columbia in 1968. For one thing, it was largely anti-Communist. Some of my professors had been Marxists of one sort or another during the 1930s, but this had largely faded. A small number had supported Henry Wallace and his policy of accommodation with the Soviets in 1948. But by 1952, that, too, had largely evaporated and Wallace himself even voted for Eisenhower. If I had to generalize about Columbia liberalism circa 1952, I would call it "New Dealish." The professors, like John Dewey before them, wanted "intelligence" to be active in shaping society. They probably underestimated things like unintended consequences on one hand and the positive value of habit on the other. And, being academics, they were not friendly to the business culture. Even William James spoke of the "bitch-goddess Success."

Yet in 1952 the integrity of the classroom was such that I do not recall a word of partisan politics being uttered by any of my Columbia professors, and indeed I would have remembered it, because it would have been shocking for a professor to plump for Stevenson in the midst of a discussion of Wordsworth or Locke or Proust. I do recall that one or two professors protested when Dwight D. Eisenhower, then president of Columbia, referred to the faculty as "employees," but this objection was not especially partisan.

By the time of the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon election, I had spent some time in the Navy, then joined the English department in 1956. In 1960 I was mildly impressed by the Kennedy candidacy. It is not often remembered that in 1960 Kennedy was running to the right of Eisenhower himself, to the right of Nixon, and certainly to the right of Stevenson, who had the third-try support of the Eleanor Roosevelt-Gene McCarthy faction of the Democratic party. Kennedy was complaining about Castro, "ninety miles off our shore," about a (fictitious) missile gap, about Sputnik, and about the supposed stodginess of the Eisenhower administration: "get this country moving again." In fact, Jack Kennedy radiated a sort of Teddy Rooseveltian "vigor" and aggressive nationalism that made Nixon seem somewhat wan in comparison. In their first televised debate, Kennedy was much more aggressive about Cuba than Nixon felt he could be,

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and Nixon concealed the preparations he was aware of for action against Castro.

One warm November afternoon after the election, I met Lionel Trilling in the lovely Van Amringe quadrangle outside Hamilton Hall and he asked me whom I had voted for. Given his usual delicacy of manner, this was a surprisingly direct question. I said I had voted for Kennedy. Then he said something even more surprising.

"You have no idea how far left this administration is going to go."

I was puzzled by that then, and I still don't know what to make of it. First of all, Lionel was wrong. Kennedy's top appointments were all centrists and even Republicans (he retained J. Edgar Hoover at the FBI and Allen Dulles at the CIA, and appointed C. Douglas Dillon at the Treasury); he cut taxes, and his anti-Communism was eloquent and unquestionable even if he got involved in fiascoes in Cuba and the beginnings of the quagmire in Vietnam.

Yet Lionel was astute and highly political, his literary criticism from the beginning had political bearings and, if not directly partisan, was political at that juncture where politics bears upon culture. When he said, so strikingly, that the Kennedy administration would move "far" to the left, I must suppose he sensed an appetite in the general culture that was tugging to the left. One might adduce the Castro cult among some intellectuals (indeed, Kennedy would be assassinated by a Castro cultist), and the currents of feeling represented by such writers as Paul Goodman, C. Wright Mills, Norman O. Brown, and by the nascent Beat movement, the longings at least hinted at in *The Lonely Crowd*, *White Collar*, *The Status Seekers*, the iconic quality of such popcult figures as James Dean, Elvis, and Brando, and countless other signs of what was coming.

None of this was manifested in the Kennedy New Frontier, the cultural style of which was hard-boiled, technocratic, and confident of its rationality. Only Robert McNamara, the whiz kid, managed to live long enough to morph into a sort of elderly hippie. In the fall of 1960, Lionel was wrong about the direction of the Kennedy administration, but he undoubtedly smelled something that was happening in the culture. Between then and his death in 1975, his criticism, always finely attuned to the culture, moved in new directions. It would be crude to say that it moved to the right. Such an assertion indeed would be challengeable. Terms like quietist, stoic, ontological, dialectical, and so forth have been used. One sees their validity. But in a large sense it would not be altogether wrong to say that his work moved far to the right in that it certainly set itself against the move to the "far" left that in 1960 he mistakenly anticipated in the Kennedy administration.

In fact, recalling vividly as I do his performance in my undergraduate classroom in 1952, I think this later development—his post-*Liberal Imagination* development it might be called—was already beginning to make itself felt.

In the autumn of 1951–52, when I signed up for Trilling's year-long senior English course on the Romantics and the Victorians he had become something extraordinary in American life: an intellectual celebrity. This, oddly, seemed more in the French or Continental model than the British, more like Gide or Camus than like Trilling's own hero Matthew Arnold, more *engagé* than the British model. He was a public figure, important to the publishing world, on the editorial boards of important magazines. His book reviews appeared in the sort of publications read by the general educated public, and he formed two small but influential book clubs. When he died at seventy in 1975, *The New York Times* carried an obituary article on page 1, calling him the representative and dominant figure of his era. His Columbia colleague Jacques Barzun has said that he was "one of the great critics" in English literature, lesser than Hazlitt perhaps, but ranking with Coleridge and Matthew Arnold. Today three more biographies of Trilling are said to be in preparation.

I mention this eminence and suggest its

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nature because it represents an especially vivid example of how a professor's achievements outside the classroom add power and interest to what he does in the classroom, even if, as in Trilling's case, the spell cast by his public celebrity may be puzzling and oblique.

When I and about twenty other seniors sat in that Columbia classroom in the autumn of 1951, Trilling entered, trailing clouds of glory from the reception of his recently published *The Liberal Imagination*, a powerful collection of essays dating from the 1940s. This was criticism that focused on the relation of literature to politics and society. It used literature as a corrective to the tendency of politics and democratic culture to drift in the direction of the simplicities of ideology and other abbreviations of thought. His targets were Stalinism, especially as it had infected liberalism, the crude sexology of Alfred Kinsey, the simplifications of the literary historian Vernon Parrington, and the frequently mindless writing of Theodore Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson.

Against all that, he persuasively marshaled his own heroes: Freud, Henry James, Wordsworth, Keats, Goethe, Shakespeare, Montaigne—and, indeed, the full Western tradition in thought and feeling. He was asking that politics and culture struggle to remain open to the complexities and subtleties of that tradition at its highest moments. In consequence, his own style as a writer owed much to Henry James in its elegance and sinuosity, and also a great deal to the manners of the Oxford style of Newman, Arnold, and T. S. Eliot. The only notable adverse review that *The Liberal Imagination* received was from Bernard Devoto, who spoke as a populist and disliked exactly those features of style and mind I have just specified.

His own presentation of self was also compelling. Someone has said that Lionel Trilling had the most intelligent face he had ever seen. We Columbia seniors certainly would have agreed with that. His deep-set eyes had dark shadows under them, suggesting intellectual and emotional pain. His gray hair was meticulously barbered and conveyed an impression of age and wisdom.

The way a professor presents himself to his students always conveys a message; even small things matter. The message can make the students respect him, or downgrade him. The message Trilling conveyed was "civilization," "mind," and also worldly success. He usually wore a finely tailored suit, occasionally a sober sports jacket; there was never any academic sloppiness. He looked as if he would be at home in Whitehall, at the Quai d'Orsay, or in any capital of the civilized world. He often smoked a cigarette or two in class, once in a while a pipe. Perhaps his favorite word was "complicated," as in his frequent "it's more complicated than that." This served to raise him above conventional generalizations, and, indeed, above his academic environment.

Like several other prominent Columbia professors—Mark Van Doren, Jacques Barzun, Gilbert Highet—he made it clear that he was not just an academic. He was in the university but not entirely of it. Trilling did not contribute to the Modern Language Association quarterly or other "professional" journals, he was invisible at large "professional" meetings, and he had a condescending attitude toward the Columbia Ph.D. program.

Trilling was a man of the world, and he had many other ways of distancing himself from an academic identity. When he strolled into our classroom he often had a faintly humorous look around his mouth, as if he had just heard a joke. This seemed to suggest that we were all complicit in a small absurdity, as if to say, when he walked in, "What are we men of the world doing here amidst blackboards and chalk?" and "Can the real things even, actually, be taught?"

Yet at the same time he left no doubt that he believed in our ongoing conversation, and, even while putting some ironic distance between himself and his role, he was also very serious about his teaching. He was committed to his duty, and he expected

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from us an equivalent response. He more than once deplored the famous incident in which Gertrude Stein turned in an examination paper to William James at Harvard, writing only that she was "so sorry," but she did "not feel like an examination paper in philosophy today." James had commented, "I understand how you feel, I often feel like that myself," and awarded her the highest grade on the test. Trilling thought this discreditable on both sides.

Most of us adored him. I did not understand until long after his death that his self-presentation, so effective for us and so effective in the larger world, was in fact a heroic achievement, a work of art and choice--of his will asserted against angers, frustrations, and the flabby devils of negation.

Indeed, his entire self-presentation was a kind of philosophic metaphor. One of his key books was Freud's late essay *Civilization and its Discontents*. Freud argued there that civilization requires repression of instinctual desires, which in turn results in neurosis, and that such is the price we pay for civilization. The confrontation is tragic for Freud, and Freud was stoic about it. Trilling's entire public behavior, indeed every sentence he wrote, celebrated a conscious decision in favor of civilization. But he must have appreciated Freud's irony in calling the pains of the resulting neuroses "discontents" (*Unbehagen*). As we now know, they were real torments of some sort with which he chose to live. And, by the way, Freud was for him not essentially the "scientist," but a philosopher of culture and a stoic moralist.

I suppose, parenthetically, that the most benign interpretation of the uprisings in the 1968 Revolution, as it might be called—largely student convulsions that took place in virtually every advanced nation—is that the rebels felt that the instinctual repressions were excessive and might be relaxed, or, more darkly, that civilization was not worth the repressions.

Lionel Trilling, considered purely on the basis of what he did in the classroom, was not a great teacher. But he taught a great deal if we take into account his communication of what he was. His discourse from the front of the room was relaxed but had just enough formality to insist upon his status as a senior professor. No first names were used in either direction. He was immensely urbane, and sometimes winning and even sweet. His diffidence tended to legitimize doubt and a sense of complexity. At the same time, I thought that his hesitation over a point might really be a matter of noblesse oblige, as if a prince felt obliged to be modest.

In our small class, he almost never lectured but rather asked questions about the assigned poetry or prose. In themselves, and apart from who he was and his obvious intellectual power, these sessions—I must say it—were not as substantial as several other Columbia professors' classes, and they could even be inconclusive and frustrating to students. We knew that his interest in literature was "complicated," but it also had an elusive quality.

In his intellectual foreground, he saw the important writers we were discussing—and not only what they wrote but also their lives—as moral facts worthy of examination and reflection. In the background was the question of whether these writers might or might not be salutary for our own lives and for the life of our culture.

Thus we arrived in class at 11 A.M. thinking that Keats had written some remarkable odes, wanting to talk in detail about how they worked and why they were good, and why Keats had improved so spectacularly over his earlier work. Trilling could deal with all of that if pressed, but he was more interested in Keats as a moral hero, sometimes seeming to be more interested in Keats's letters than in his poetry. He thought Byron was a great and fascinating figure. We thought he was a sloppy poet, a publicity creation; someone compared him to Norman Mailer.

We all agreed that when Wordsworth was writing at peak form he was a tremendous poet, but Trilling could dwell on some odd

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things—for example, on that cloud in the great poem "Resolution and Independence." In the poem, Wordsworth experiences a moment of despair, maybe suicidal. He remembers strong Romantic poets who have died young (Burns) or committed suicide (Chatterton). Is this to be his own fate? But then he sees an aged man gathering medicinal leeches from a swamp. This leech-gatherer is so old he is almost bent double. It occurs to Wordsworth that if this old man can go on living, can endure, so surely can he. And in a suggestive, slightly elusive comparison he likens the old man to a cloud.

> Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,
> That heareth not the loud winds when
> they call;
> And moveth all together, if it move at all.

There is a great deal to encompass in this poem, including the complicated operations of the poet's unconscious mind, and of course the poetry is stunning line by line, but Trilling dwelled on that cloud, on how seemingly solid such a cloud could be, how it might remain stationary despite those loud winds. This *is* how the old Man seems, to be sure, but Trilling's enthusiasm for the cloud was mysterious. No more than the cloud, did he seem to move on. He did not assert that he saw it as a metaphor for the private experience and philosophic concept of "being," but that is what I think he had in mind. Later, when he wrote an important essay on Wordsworth, he said that he especially admired in him the "sentiment of being"—the sense of something solid in one's identity, permanence somehow within flux. Perhaps that cloud, moving among the loud winds, was "being."

But this was a pretty difficult discussion subject for a college classroom. What is the student to say? And it seemed odd to focus on that cloud to the exclusion of a great deal else in the poem. Thus it was difficult to pull the professor back from spiritual possibilities to the actual words a writer had put upon a page. When he himself tried his hand at a close consideration of a poem, as in his essay on Wordsworth's "Immortality" ode in *The Liberal Imagination*, the results were not especially good.

We understood, however, that he was not a literary critic in the usual sense but an artist of the spirit working through literature, a secular rabbi or priest. He wanted literature to cause us to reflect upon our imperfect selves, on our simple-mindedness and group-think, on our undoubted vulgarity, on the formlessness of our ambitions, on the poverty of our imaginations—and, by so reflecting, move in the direction of perfection. His important biography of Matthew Arnold had come out in 1939, and Arnold may have been his ultimate hero, the Arnold who wrote of Oxford University and also poetry as "calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection."

Trilling's sense of perfection was indeed "complicated," and his mind moved among contradictions, creating an ongoing process of balancing and revision. Yet we knew that perfection was what he wanted and that he may have embodied it.

We had no idea of the struggle that went on behind this perfection. His only novel is called *The Middle of the Journey* (1947), the title alluding to the opening line of Dante. His widow, Diana, published her memoir of their life together in 1993 and called it *The Beginning of the Journey*, since it dealt mainly with their early years together. Of course, their lives could not have been continuously awful, though judging from the memoir things were pretty bad. Yet it is difficult to tell from her account just how bad things actually were on a day-to-day basis. I myself tremble at the thought of being married to a woman who was an expert on D. H. Lawrence and mystical sex, but I have to guess that there was much humor and pleasure and even serenity. Very different from the grim tone of *The Beginning of the Journey* is a recently discovered and posthumously published essay by Mrs. Trilling entitled "A Visit to Camelot." It recounts a 1962 visit by the Trillings to the Kennedy White House on the occasion of a banquet

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for leading intellectuals, and it is full of fun, humor, and strong mutual affection between the Trillings.

Yet there is no dismissing the evidence of her memoir. Lionel and she were constantly under unsuccessful and expensive psychoanalysis and she was in frequent ill-health. When I knew her she was good company, but had a phobia about ascending above the first floor. She would not fly. In her memoir, she recounts ghastly screaming matches with Lionel in which he would accuse her of "ruining my life." He was even highly ambivalent about being a college professor—despite our view of him as a kind of ideal—and was often angry about being a mere teacher. He really wanted to be a great novelist.

The fact of the matter is that he failed as a writer of fiction because he could not do the first thing necessary: create a distinctive fictional world. You cannot read a sentence by Dickens, Faulkner, Hemingway, or Dostoyevsky without knowing just what fictional world you are in. One of the reasons we are drawn to such fiction is that these worlds are more intensely real than the actual world we are experiencing. Trilling could not do that, and Diana reports that he blamed this on, and was enraged about, his own repressions, as he thought them. He believed that he had failed as a novelist because of . . . his Civilization. Ye gods! He thought he had failed because of just what he was so successfully teaching us to be, civilized.

At one point in the 1930s he had what amounted to an obsession with Hemingway. Diana Trilling cites a 1933 entry in his journal in which he describes a letter Hemingway had sent to Clifton Fadiman:

> A crazy letter, written when he was drunk—self-revealing, arrogant, scared, trivial, absurd: yet felt from reading it how right such a man is compared to the 'good minds' of my university life—how he will produce and mean something to the world. . . . How his life which he could expose without dignity and which is anarchic and 'childish' is a better life than anyone I know can live, and right for his job. And how far-far-far I am from being a writer—and how less and less I have the material and the will.

Trilling thought he could not be a great novelist because of his respectability, his supposed disconnection from instinct, his repression. This was an astounding misconception, no doubt a rationalization. By 1933 Hemingway was on the skids as an artist, surely in part because of the behavior reflected in the letter to Fadiman. Very many great writers of fiction have not been obvious devotees of instinct: Fielding, Austen, Thackeray, George Eliot, Proust, Mann, Gide—the list could go on.

In fact, the prose in Trilling's essays is imaginative, dramatic, and personal—better than the prose of most novelists, and much better than the prose in his own attempts at fiction. I remember having a discussion with him when I was in the Columbia English department about Matthew Arnold's first-rate prose and second-rate poetry. "Which would you rather have?" I asked him, "Arnold's poetry or his prose?" He equivocated a bit, but I'm sure he got the point as it applied to his own work. His essays were worth all the novels he did and didn't write. The novel, creating scene and character, was not his destiny.

In her memoir, Trilling's widow argues very strongly that his civilized presentation of self—the man we knew—was an evasion and an unworthy one. It was very different from their life at home, did not reflect his torments, and thus was entirely inauthentic. Still, she was very psychoanalytical, and like the culture of psychoanalysis she thought he should have been more "honest" about his torments to his readers and especially to his students. She thinks they adored a dishonesty.

I reviewed her memoir in a friendly way but beg to differ on this very important point. I think his self-creation, in retrospect, a heroic act, a work of art and a major work of art at that. He liked to quote Keats in his letters that life is "a vale of soul-making,"

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and he often celebrated Keats's heroic will, as in his statement, dying, that "I shall be among the English poets." I am certain that Lionel immensely enjoyed his achieved self, at least came to take pleasure in it, even in its small rituals and absurdities, and was fully aware of his achievement. In that sense his achieved self became his real self and thus "authentic."

Indeed, why should he have made his torments public? He sometimes said that manners are the public signals of the intentions of the soul. As intelligent, civilized, learned, ironic, sweet, and powerful, he was enormously important to a great many students. If he had ever screamed at me in his office and begun to talk about his sex life and his nightmares, I probably would have collapsed on the carpet in his Hamilton Hall office.

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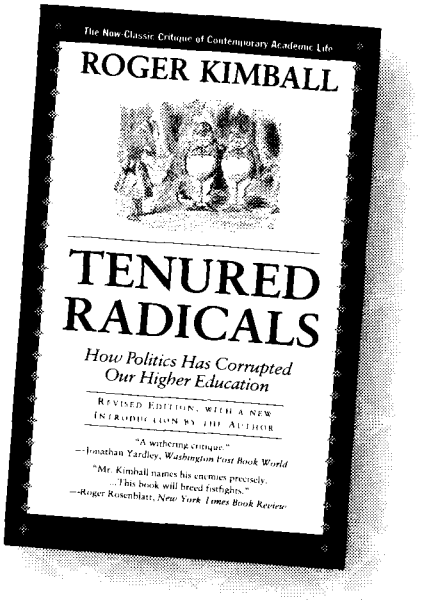
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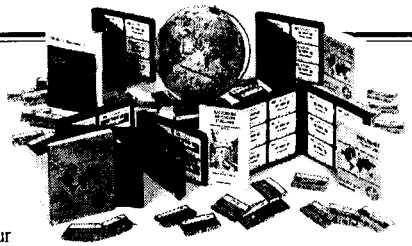

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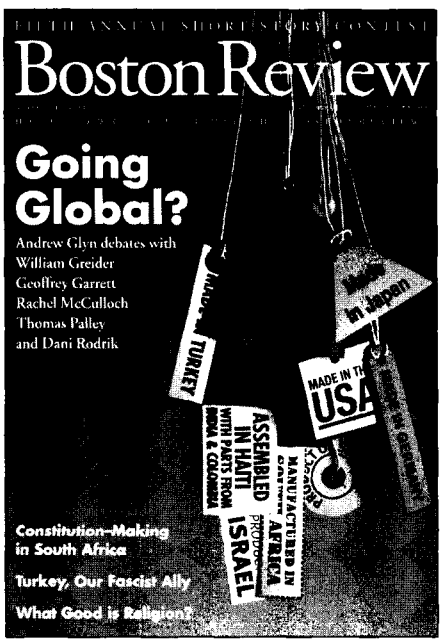

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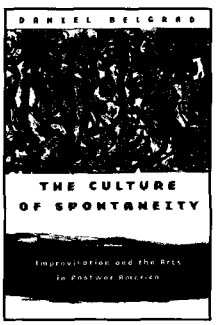

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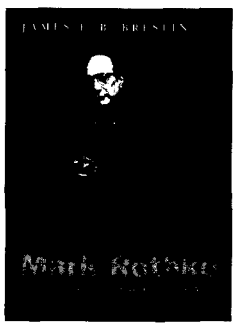

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